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Chairman: Mr. Penke (Latvia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 62: Advancement of women (continued)
(A/64/38)

(a) Advancement of women (continued)

(A/64/79-E/2009/74; A/64/151, 152, 164, 190 and 342)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (continued) (A/64/218)

1. **Ms. Shinohara** (Japan) said that her country was working to create a gender-equal society and promoting women's empowerment on the basis of internationally agreed principles and instruments. It was crucial to promote gender mainstreaming in every phase of United Nations activities. Japan supported the establishment of a new gender entity, underscoring the need to avoid duplication and fragmentation, and the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on sexual violence and armed conflict and the enhancement of women's participation in the peacebuilding process.
2. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had examined Japan's sixth report in July 2009, welcoming positive steps, such as the appointment of a Minister for Gender Equality, and pointing out areas where more progress was needed, such as women's participation in the decision-making process. At present, 11.3 per cent of members of the House of Representatives were women, the highest proportion yet achieved.
3. The fifteen-year review of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action would be undertaken at the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2010. In response to the previous session, Japan, together with the United Nations Development Programme, had held a symposium to discuss unpaid care work. Japan would take the anniversary as an opportunity to renew its commitment to the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment.
4. **Ms. Rovirosa** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, called upon States to participate at the highest level in the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women and to confirm their commitment to the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration

and Platform for Action. She noted that the Secretary-General's successful Unite to End Violence against Women campaign could serve to coordinate actions by Governments, civil society, community organizations, the private sector and the media.

5. Gender equality and women's empowerment were key factors for social development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Efforts to increase women's participation in decision-making and in public office, including at the highest levels of government and in the economic, cultural and social sectors, should remain a national and international priority.

6. Member countries of the Rio Group were enacting laws on gender equality. Their institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women participated in the design of public policies with cooperation from international and regional organizations, civil society and community organizations. International organizations and the developed countries should support national programmes for women's equality and empowerment, and specific actions should be taken at all levels to prevent and eradicate violence against women. Latin American and Caribbean countries had been pioneers in developing instruments and mechanisms in that area.

7. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) had created a Gender Equality Observatory and subregional mechanisms for women, including the Council of Central American Ministers for Women's Affairs, and had contributed to developing a broad agenda of gender issues in the region. The eleventh session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean would be held in Brazil in 2010, coinciding with the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. One of the central themes of the Conference would be equality of opportunities for economic development and the impacts of the economic and financial crisis on gender equality.

8. The International Day of Rural Women would be celebrated on 15 October. In many of the Rio Group's member States, rural women, including indigenous women, represented a large part of the population and had made a significant contribution to development. Nevertheless, rural women continued to face broad challenges throughout the world and the international

community should intensify its efforts to empower them.

9. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) carried out important activities in partnership with Governments, civil society and other United Nations funds and programmes. Any methodology adopted for the allocation of resources to UNIFEM regional offices should include specific indicators for the advancement and empowerment of women. Lastly, the Rio Group hoped that the constructive consultations for preparation of a new gender architecture would continue. Its member countries were committed to ensuring the empowerment and equality of women as it was impossible to overcome underdevelopment and social exclusion while gender differences persisted.

10. **Ms. Ellis** (Australia), speaking on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum, said that the Forum's Regional Security Committee had recently discussed sexual and gender-based violence. It was a serious violation of human rights which caused trauma to women, limited their community participation and strained national economies, undermining efforts to end poverty in the region. Raising awareness of the link between women's economic empowerment and peace and security was a necessary step for eradicating sexual violence.

11. The Forum had strengthened its resolve to end permissive attitudes to sexual violence and to place sexual and gender-based violence on the political agenda. It welcomed efforts at the local, national and regional levels to address that issue and called on the United Nations system to strengthen its resolve to collect evidence-based data to support accounts of sexual and gender-based violence.

12. The Forum welcomed the efforts to create a new gender entity and the commitment to include women in peacebuilding and address sexual violence in conflict situations. The view held by some Governments and military personnel that gender-based violence was a by-product of war was intolerable. All States should build judicial and security institutions to prevent and prosecute sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated in conflict situations.

13. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan) said that despite technological advances and human development, women continued to suffer discrimination and exclusion in terms of jobs, credit, capital markets and basic services. Their work was often informal,

unmeasured and poorly paid, and their abilities far from utilized, despite their contribution to the economic survival of poor households and overall economic input.

14. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly remained the guiding policy framework for all States. Yet progress towards meeting the two Millennium Development Goals that were linked to women was slow. The global economic crisis had aggravated the feminization of poverty and violence against women was a major impediment to women's social and economic development. Synergies should be developed between the new gender entity and the intergovernmental process for system-wide coherence.

15. Pakistan's Constitution guaranteed all citizens equality before the law, and women participated in all areas of life. Pakistan had elected the first woman Prime Minister in the Muslim world and had selected the first woman speaker of a National Assembly in South Asia. Women accounted for 17 per cent of senators and 22.5 per cent of members of the Lower House.

16. Pakistan's initiatives to eliminate exploitation and discrimination against women included the adoption of the Protection of Women Act; an income support programme for women heads of household; a gender reform action plan focused on gender mainstreaming; and a youth development programme providing training stipends for young people, particularly girls. A Gender Crime Cell had been established, and there was zero tolerance of violence against women. Women's centres and shelters were being expanded, and the National Assembly would soon consider a bill on protection against workplace harassment. The private sector and the media helped to promote awareness of women's rights.

17. Gender equality and women's empowerment could be achieved only through international cooperation and global partnerships. Financial resources were needed for women's education, health and job creation in order to eliminate gender disparities. The international community should honour its commitment to official development assistance and offer debt relief and open markets to give opportunities to women.

18. **Mr. Bashir** (Iraq) said that the new Iraqi State was founded on equality of rights and obligations, the protection of women's rights being central to the country's national strategy. Numerous national institutions had been set up to raise women's awareness and educate them concerning their rights. The Government also intended to establish a national centre for the protection of Iraqi women against violence, under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister, as well as assistance and guidance centres for women. The Government had conducted consciousness-raising campaigns in the media on female circumcision and crimes of honour with a view to criminalizing and putting a stop to those phenomena. New legislative provisions set prison penalties for forced marriage and trafficking in human beings, in particular women.

19. The promotion of the empowerment of women was best evidenced by Iraq's adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Cairo Plan of Action, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. The women of Iraq had shown great courage and ability in the face of terrorism and violence. They had participated in elections and also, by virtue of the public offices that they had come to occupy after moving from oppression to freedom and democracy, in the drafting of the Constitution. The granting by the United States Secretary of State of one of eight International Women of Courage awards to an Iraqi woman in 2008 was a testament to the courage and activism of the country's women.

20. Iraq's new Constitution, the most advanced in the region in terms of support for human rights, especially women's rights, strengthened equality between women and men before the law, forbidding discrimination on grounds of sex and guaranteeing suitable housing and incomes for women. It also called for at least 25 per cent female membership in Parliament, a rate that had surpassed 30 per cent in Iraqi Kurdistan. Women currently held three ministerial portfolios. Moreover, numerous laws guaranteed women's rights in the areas of family, work, social protection and health care and enhanced the role of the High-level National Committee for the Advancement of Iraqi Women through the creation of a mechanism to follow up

national strategies in accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

21. The abolition of the ban on travel by Iraqi women without a male relative; the increase in the number of women working in the foreign service; awareness-raising courses on gender, empowerment and other women-related issues held in various institutions; recognition of outstanding women in sports and other areas; and the provision of Government support to low-income and immigrant households, especially women-headed households, were all signs of advances in women's rights in the new Iraq. Lastly, he said that the people of Iraq were in need of support from States and regional and international organizations in continuing to improve security and build Iraqi society, including with regard to women, and expressed the gratitude of his Government to all those that had assisted Iraq.

22. **Ms. Sapag** (Chile) said that his delegation welcomed the progress made in implementing some of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's 2006 in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122 and Add.1). The adoption of Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009) on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict reflected a new determination to deal with those issues. Her country supported all the efforts made to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and related instruments on sexual violence against children and recommended that women should be included at the negotiating table in peace processes.

23. Conscious of women's role as agents of change and peacebuilders, Chile had launched a national plan of action to comply with Security Council resolution 1325 (2004) on women and peace and security. It was a pioneering strategy in Latin America, with measures to protect women in situations of armed conflict and incentives for their participation in the peace process. She welcomed the increase in contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund to support measures to eliminate violence against women.

24. The Millennium Development Goal of reducing maternal mortality was the Goal towards which the least progress had been made. Chile's indicators in that area were good and the country was participating in a regional campaign of horizontal cooperation to reduce maternal and child mortality in vulnerable groups. She shared the concern expressed by the delegation of Mexico that any methodology for resource allocation

to the regional offices of UNIFEM should be established in consultation with the region and include indicators reflecting the reality of women in the region. Chile looked forward to a comprehensive report on system-wide coherence and supported the efforts to mainstream a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.

25. Her Government was implementing a pro-gender equity agenda for the period 2006-2010. Initiatives included the establishment of a basic pension for housewives, with bonuses for mothers; the expansion of nursery facilities, an increase in the minimum wage for women domestic workers, and the provision of women's centres and shelters for victims of domestic violence.

26. **Ms. Zhang Dan** (China) said that the current global financial crisis had brought daunting challenges for gender equality and women's enjoyment of basic rights such as health, employment and education. The international community should formulate policies and programmes incorporating the gender perspective, taking the views of women's organizations into account.

27. The United Nations should play a greater role in responding to the crisis and promoting gender equality. The international community should increase its assistance to developing countries to help them maintain economic and social stability and safeguard the basic rights and interests of women and children. China welcomed the decision to consolidate existing United Nations gender bodies into a new composite entity. Reform in areas such as governance and funding should also lead to progress in economic and social development.

28. China had incorporated women's development into its overall national development plan and was working on the prevention of domestic violence, abduction and trafficking in women and children and on support for human rights. Efforts had been made to promote women's employment and entrepreneurship, provide support to rural women and safeguard women's rights and interests, including by eliminating violence against women. Chinese institutions such as rights protection courts, legal aid centres for women, domestic violence complaint centres and women's shelters had made a significant contribution.

29. **Mr. Chidyausiku** (Zimbabwe) said that comprehensive measures for securing gender equality

and protecting women's human rights in line with national and international frameworks were of paramount importance. Zimbabwe thus supported the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. It had given priority to Millennium Development Goal 3 in particular and set out policies and programmes to help improve the status of women and girls. The implementation of binding international instruments like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and regional instruments such as an African Union Protocol on Women's Rights were critical to help women to enjoy and exercise their full and equal rights.

30. Zimbabwe's commitment to the advancement and empowerment of women was evident through its adoption of a national gender policy to promote gender mainstreaming in 2000 and the recent submission of its combined report on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It had also enacted laws to promote the legal status of women and protect their inheritance rights, criminalize the wilful transmission of HIV/AIDS and marital rape, expand maternal rights and equal employment opportunities. The Government had adopted a domestic violence law in 2007 to protect survivors of gender-based violence and employed a multisectoral approach to the problem, involving various stakeholders.

31. His country still faced obstacles, however, in capturing data and establishing an effective and efficient statistical office to track domestic violence. The United Nations and donors should thus provide the necessary resources and training to strengthen data collection and analysis. Zimbabwe was leading a consultative process to draw up a comprehensive national law preventing trafficking in women and children. He noted with concern that a number of those victims were women migrant workers and called on the United Nations and other relevant institutions to raise awareness and forge new partnerships and cooperation in that area.

32. The confluence of the financial, economic, fuel and food crises and climate change further exacerbated the inequalities and discrimination that women faced, particularly those living in rural areas. In that respect, his Government sought to enhance women's

participation in key sectors of the economy such as mining, agriculture, industry and commerce, including through the establishment of a quota for women under the land reform programme and through loans in the agricultural sector.

33. For those measures to be successful, however, the illegal unilateral coercive sanctions imposed on his country should be lifted, as they harmed the economically disadvantaged. Lastly, his delegation generally supported the establishment of a composite gender entity, provided it would have a strong field presence to support countries in implementing their commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment in line with national priorities. He emphasized that programmes for women should not be sacrificed in the process of reforming the United Nations.

34. **Mr. Arthur** (Norway) said that in many countries women and girls were still at the margins of society and deprived of their human rights to health, education, land ownership and inheritance, which made them vulnerable to violence and abuse. The price was paid by the entire population in real economic and development terms, as the Human Development Report showed the strong correlation between gender equality and growth and prosperity.

35. School enrolment rates and demographic statistics were clear indicators: fewer girls than boys attended school, and fewer girls survived childhood. Girls were not wanted or not fed or not given the care that they needed. Women died from childbirth complications because of the lack of basic health care. The Millennium Development Goal of reducing maternal mortality was under-funded and under-supported. Norway's 2010 budget would sustain its development assistance at 1 per cent of gross national income. One third of Norway's bilateral aid focused on policies for the advancement of women.

36. Even when countries had appropriate legislation and gender-sensitive policies, the entrenched attitudes of men were still an impediment to progress. A number of strategies should be pursued with regard to violence against women, including the provision of protection, medical care, legal advice and support services for victims. Perpetrators should be brought to justice, and boys and men should be engaged in the efforts to change attitudes and stereotypes that perpetuated inequalities.

37. Despite measures taken by intergovernmental bodies for gender equality and women's empowerment, a wide gap persisted between intentions and results. Mainstreaming of gender issues meant that girls should be given special protection and attention, as being born a girl was in itself a disadvantage. Boys should be sensitized to gender equality issues at an early stage of life. Lastly, Norway commended the global Unite to End Violence against Women campaign. The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women had received requests for assistance in 2009 totalling \$900 million, yet the Fund's available resources were a mere \$12 million. His Government hoped to see the new composite gender entity operational by the summer of 2010.

38. **Mr. Webb** (United States of America) said that the United Nations had recently taken significant steps to improve the lives of women and girls, including the adoption in September of Security Council resolution 1888 (2009) to strengthen existing tools to address sexual violence as a tactic of war and the adoption in the previous week of Security Council resolution 1889 (2009) to increase the role and contributions of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The broad support for those resolutions was a clear sign that the international community recognized the link between maintaining international peace and security and preventing and responding to sexual violence against women as a tactic of war and that women must be full participants in peacebuilding.

39. The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, had led to changes in laws, attitudes and outcomes, and there was a growing awareness of women's status as a global issue that could not be ignored. Peace, security and economic growth were impossible without women's full and equal participation. Men and boys were important partners in the efforts to empower women. Research had shown the correlation of investments in women with favourable outcomes for economic growth, good governance and democratic progress. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific had reported in 2007 on the huge costs to the region resulting from barriers to women's employment and gender gaps in education.

40. Recent private-sector initiatives included partnerships to improve the lives of women and girls, initiated by the United Nations, individual countries, private sector foundations and academic organizations.

There had also been support from non-traditional allies, including men and religious leaders. In September 2008, on the occasion of the United Nations high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals, the world's religious leaders had made a pledge to help stop violence against women. The Secretary-General had formed a network of male leaders who would work to eliminate violence against women and girls. As the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration approached, it was important to look at creative ways to increase those new partnerships.

41. Member States should also demonstrate their political will. In 2009, the President of the United States had established the White House Council on Women and Girls, which included representatives of all cabinet-level federal agencies. The position of Ambassador-at-large for Global Women's Issues had also been created.

42. The United States welcomed the resolution on the composite gender entity and planning should begin immediately to build on the momentum of reform. Streamlining work on women's rights and equality into a single entity was in line with the broader interest of making sure that the United Nations could deliver on its mandate. Gender should be mainstreamed throughout the United Nations system. In the face of increasingly interconnected global challenges: poverty, disease, climate change and conflict, the United Nations had to be able to make a real change in people's lives around the world and the new composite entity would be an important part of that broader vision.

43. **Ms. Gendi** (Egypt) said that today's meeting coincided with the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development and preparation for the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It was important to renew all the commitments made for the advancement of women and to make further pledges to support developing countries' capacities to address the impacts of the global crises which negatively impacted the status of women.

44. The new composite entity for gender issues would be a starting point for dealing with women's issues in a coherent and unified manner. In that regard, Member States should make funds available for assisting developing and the least developed countries

to fulfil their commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Donor countries should also fulfil their pledges to UNIFEM.

45. Girl-friendly schools had been established throughout the country, in particular at the compulsory primary level. Other achievements included support for women's political empowerment at the local level; the reservation of 56 seats in the national Parliament for women; a nationwide campaign to end violence against women; and the establishment of complaint mechanisms and gender focal points in all government institutions, agencies and ministries. The number of women judges had been increased, particularly in the family courts. Children born to an Egyptian mother or father were granted Egyptian nationality.

46. In 2009, during its presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Egypt had established the NAM Centre for the advancement of women. It was also hosting the new women's agency established by the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The Organization of Arab Women had launched initiatives for gender equality and to fight trafficking in persons. The international campaign "End Human Trafficking Now!" had been supported by civil society, the private sector and the business community, in an effort endorsed by both the African Union and the Non-Aligned Movement.

47. **Ms. Hoang Thi Thanh Nga** (Viet Nam) said that her delegation was pleased by the significant progress that had been achieved in raising public awareness around the world on the importance of eliminating discrimination against women and promoting their role in political and economic decision-making. In order to overcome the challenges that remained in that area, gender mainstreaming should be further promoted in all United Nations strategies and programmes, development programmes in particular, and Member States must make further efforts to incorporate the gender perspective into their legal systems, development strategies and all other socio-economic policies.

48. In Viet Nam, public awareness on gender equality and the role of women in socio-economic life had improved considerably, particularly in rural areas, after a law on gender equality and one on the prevention of domestic violence had come into effect in 2007 and in 2008, respectively. Ensuring enhanced participation of

women should not be limited to setting quotas for their representation in governance institutions, but should be evident in their capacity to contribute to decision-making. Women's education and training was key in that regard, and her Government had made great efforts to ensure equal access to education for women and girls and reduce their drop-out rate.

49. Women's economic empowerment played a critical role in achieving gender equality. Over the past five years, income and employment opportunities for women had improved significantly in Viet Nam. Their access to loans had also been enhanced and many micro-credit programmes with women as the major beneficiaries had been implemented effectively in many of the country's provinces. It was hoped that the United Nations would further facilitate efforts to promote women's economic empowerment. Lastly, she commended its initiative to develop a gender marker system pioneered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which allowed decision-makers to track funds allocated to women-centred projects.

50. **Ms. Gomes Bustamante** (Brazil) said that her delegation welcomed the United Nations Secretary-General's campaign *Unite to End Violence Against Women*, which provided a platform for mobilizing Member States and United Nations agencies to eliminate all forms of violence against women. Brazil had been making steady progress towards the advancement of women through a range of policies, plans and programmes aimed at reducing gender inequalities, promoting social inclusion and social development and combating violence against women, including with participation from all relevant stakeholders.

51. Those measures addressed issues like the sexual exploitation of women and trafficking in young women and girls, protecting the human rights of women in prison as well as sexual, reproductive and maternity rights, and actions aimed at more vulnerable groups like rural workers, indigenous women and women of African descent. Enactment of the *Maria da Penha Law*, which helped women who were victims of violence to seek support and bring perpetrators to trial, had been a major breakthrough in curbing violence against women. Over 125,000 women had received support in that context since 2006.

52. Brazil had implemented a plan to combat trafficking in persons, which focused on prevention,

and bringing perpetrators to justice. However, since the main victims of trafficking were young women and girls from the poorest regions, developed countries — the main destination of women victims — also had an important role to play in ending the problem. The Government was also deeply concerned by the feminization of HIV/AIDS and had specific programmes in place to reduce the vulnerability of women and teenagers to HIV, providing treatment to all those requiring it, including through free and universal access to drugs.

53. Women's participation in leading positions, including in the high ranks of Government, must be increased. She welcomed the establishment of a new composite entity under the direct responsibility of the Secretary-General through General Assembly resolution 63/311. That body would need adequate and stable funding to be effective, including through resources currently being allocated through the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to the regional offices, and adequate mechanisms to ensure Member States' oversight of its activities.

54. **Ms. Abdelrahman** (Sudan) said that the stability brought by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement had enabled Sudanese women, who had gained the right to vote in 1954 and the right to stand for election in 1964, to win 25 per cent of the seats in the legislative assembly in 2008. They currently held 11 per cent of high leadership positions in the civil service, 6.8 per cent of federal ministerial posts, 8 per cent of posts of minister of state and 18.6 per cent of the seats in the National Assembly. In the civil service 22 per cent of intermediate supervisory posts and 66 per cent of all secretarial administrative posts were occupied by women. In the private sector, women were entirely free to own and engage in commercial enterprises, the level of participation of women being 54 per cent.

55. The State, believing in the pioneering role of women in community-building and their importance in production, especially in rural areas, had established a National Committee for the Advancement of Women and, to facilitate the Committee's task, had drafted a national policy designed chiefly for gender mainstreaming, improving health care and encouraging and facilitating marriage to promote healthy practices and family cohesion and help prevent divorce stemming from poverty. There was a national policy aimed at bridging the gender gap in basic education by 2010, achieving universal basic education for both

sexes by 2015 and increasing vocational and technical education and training opportunities for girls, which had permitted a 35 per cent increase in women's participation in the labour market. To improve the condition of rural women, the Government had opened windows for the export of their products, while the National Plan for the Empowerment of Women sought to include more women under social security. The laws aimed at ending violence against women had been strengthened, and a unit had been created within the Ministry of Justice to monitor the effort to combat such violence, including in conflict zones.

56. Women had played an effective part in peacebuilding in eastern Sudan as well as in the South. As a result, many women had moved up to prominent positions, one of them as assistant to the President of the Republic. That trend was clear from the course of the peace process since the Oslo Donor Conference, after which the Women's Centre for Peace and Development had been established to coordinate women's efforts in peacebuilding, so that women were currently playing a role of equal importance to that of men in establishing peace in Darfur. Sudan had a cultural heritage and a value system that emphasized equality and justice between the sexes and the importance of women's role in nation-building. The transitional Constitution therefore fully guaranteed their political, civil, social, cultural and economic rights, including the right to equal pay and other employment benefits.

57. International assistance remained essential to the realization of the Millennium Development Goal of empowering women, ending violence against them and preserving their dignity. The role of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in helping countries achieve that and other Millennium Goals within the framework of the Beijing Platform for Action was laudable, as was its pioneering role in capacity-building in many developing countries, including the Sudan. Also to be commended was the Fund's cooperation with other United Nations agencies in preventing the spread of AIDS and achieving United Nations goals relating to the empowerment of women. All partners and donors were urged to double their contributions to the Fund to further its work of improving the status of women and ending violence against them everywhere.

58. Notwithstanding the gains made, the challenges to the advancement of women, especially rural women, had increased in view of the crises facing the world,

thus making it even more necessary than before for donor countries to meet their agreed commitments, pardon the debts of the least developed countries and lift economic sanctions against developing countries, including the Sudan. It was also imperative to awaken the world's conscience to the suffering of women whose rights were being violated under foreign occupation in Palestine and to move the international community to act to preserve their rights and their dignity.

59. **Mr. Borg** (Malta) said that, while his delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union, he wished to reiterate that any position taken or recommendations made regarding women's empowerment and gender equality in relation to sexual reproductive health and rights should not create any obligation for any party to consider abortion as a legitimate form of reproductive health rights, services or commodities. In that sense, his Government did not view the terms "sexual reproductive health and rights", "reproductive rights" and "reproductive health services" as signifying abortion, or the imposition of that practice on Malta or its Constitution. National legislation considered the termination of pregnancy through induced abortion as illegal and did not recognize abortion as a family planning measure.

60. Malta was committed to the advancement of women in all social and economic spheres of society and had taken measures to integrate the gender perspective into its development strategies. Gender mainstreaming was a priority for his Government and had been strengthened within the national agenda to ensure equal opportunities in the development, application, analysis and monitoring of all its laws, policies and programmes. Malta was promoting women's advancement, for example, by empowering them to participate in the labour market, addressing the situation of persons at risk of poverty, and helping both women and men suffering from violence.

61. Malta's Constitution guaranteed the equality of women and men in the enjoyment of all economic, cultural, civil and political rights, and a number of laws had been enacted to protect the rights of women and give support to provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Furthermore, family legislation had been amended to grant both spouses equal rights and responsibilities towards children and the administration of property acquired during marriage, and public

awareness was being raised regarding gender equality through collaboration with various bodies including trade unions and women's NGOs.

62. In the context of the world economic slowdown, his Government had adopted gender-inclusive measures to stimulate the economy and was committed to addressing the emerging needs of families, employees and businesses. Such measures included fiscal incentives to female employees and were designed to encourage other women to participate in the labour market, child-care services, flexible working arrangements and tackling discriminatory practices and policies in the provision of goods and services in public administration. The Government was also carrying out research on stumbling blocks to female participation in the job market and in decision-making, and on the impact of gender on entrepreneurship, with a view to shaping future policies.

63. **Ms. Hlaing** (Myanmar) said that her country's traditional law and successive State constitutions guaranteed women equal rights with men, and the welfare and advancement of women were never overlooked. Her Government strove to ensure that women continued to enjoy their rights unhindered, and that momentum was sustained with help from the United Nations and local and international non-governmental organizations. Among the various organizations playing an important role in promoting the development of women in Myanmar were its National Committee for Women's Affairs, which carried out activities based on the twelve areas of concern articulated in the Beijing Platform for Action, and its Women's Affairs Federation, which was helping to implement those activities, including a micro-credit scheme for women in need and micro-financing for women affected by Cyclone Nargis.

64. Myanmar's traditions and culture stressed the need to protect women and girls from abuse, including from sexual and gender-based violence. Legislation and measures were in place to prevent such violence and protect its victims. Those found guilty of rape were incarcerated and shunned by society. Gang rape was unimaginable in Myanmar, and allegations that such cases were being carried out with impunity were unfounded. Myanmar also supported the zero-tolerance policy regarding violence against women and girls and was working to ensure that the socio-economic needs and priorities of women were met. Her delegation

welcomed the Secretary-General's global campaign to end violence against women.

65. Myanmar was tackling the issue of trafficking in persons by developing a comprehensive framework that included the strengthening of legislation, a national action plan and increasing cooperation at all levels. Its commitment was evident, for example, through the heavy penalties for perpetrators under its Penal Code, its work as a party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols against trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, and its participation in the regional Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. Her country had also signed memorandums of understanding to foster a multi-sector response to the human trafficking problem involving other countries in the region. Myanmar's domestic laws were being reviewed to bring them into line with the new State Constitution and the country's obligations under international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

66. **Mr. Çorman** (Turkey) observed that international legal instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the widespread efforts of the international community, including NGOs, had helped achieve progress towards eliminating barriers to the advancement of women and girls, leading to greater awareness on the rights and needs of women, and various Security Council resolutions underlined the importance of women's empowerment as key to sustained international peace. Nevertheless, much remained to be done to ensure universal observance of the rights of women and to overcome the remaining challenges, including those related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

67. As the reforms that Turkey had undertaken in recent years had lifted all legal barriers to gender equality, his Government was focusing on achieving de facto gender equality. In that respect, Turkey had made great strides in mainstreaming gender equality by working with civil society. Bearing in mind the importance of monitoring outcomes related to the advancement of women, his Government had established special committees to address matters relating to health, education, the economy, the environment, poverty and the human rights of women,

and in March that year, had also established a Parliamentary Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

68. His Government had drawn up an action plan, with participation from civil society, for combating domestic violence against women, which would be put into effect in 2010, and awareness-raising campaigns were being conducted with help from the mass media, universities, local administrations and civil society organizations. Turkey was also helping to raise awareness on women's issues at the international level, as evidenced through its hosting of an upcoming international women's congress.

69. **Ms. Pérez Álvarez** (Cuba) said that the increase in the feminization of poverty worldwide remained a cause of serious concern in spite of the progress achieved in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The main obstacles in achieving the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals included the reduction of official development assistance (ODA), the negative consequences of the structural adjustment programmes, the foreign debt of the countries of the South, and the stagnation of international trade negotiations in the Doha Round.

70. Without sustainable development and a just and equitable international order aimed at eradicating poverty, full gender equality and the empowerment of women would never be achieved. Addressing those inequalities would also require putting an end to unequal trade relations, the imbalance in the exploitation of natural resources, inflation, and irrational military expenditures. The international monetary system must be replaced and the foreign debt of the countries of the South cancelled.

71. The elimination of violence against women also required the elimination of unilateral coercive measures. In that respect, the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed unilaterally on Cuba by the United States Government for over half a century constituted an act of genocide and was the main form of violence from which Cuban women and girls suffered. She also denounced the suffering of the mothers, wives and children of five Cubans who had been serving unjust and arbitrary sentences in the United States for 10 years for denouncing the criminal acts of terrorist groups that operated from United

States soil against Cuba. Moreover, her Government called on the Government of the United States to issue immediately a humanitarian visa to enable Adriana Pérez O' Connor, the wife of one of the five detainees, Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, to visit her husband. The United States authorities had denied her a visa to visit him 10 times since his arbitrary detention in 1998.

72. Cuba had been working for gender equality and women's empowerment well before the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and had been the first to sign and ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Moreover, women currently held more than 40 per cent of the seats in Cuba's Parliament. Cuba would continue to work to actively engage the issue of system-wide coherence in the United Nations. At the same time, rich countries must understand that the effects of the current economic and financial crises went well beyond the underdeveloped South. Immediate solutions were needed, and more than ever, the right to development was critical in advancing the situation of women in the countries of the South.

73. **Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) said that her country approached women's issues holistically. Its general strategy on the family, the basic unit of society, included a national plan for the advancement of women. She commended international efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and called on the United Nations to coordinate its efforts to provide system-wide coherence on the issue. In Qatar, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs had conducted a comprehensive review of relevant national laws relating to domestic violence and had submitted information on State measures taken to address violence against women, for the Secretary-General's database on violence against women.

74. The hotlines that had been set up by a national foundation for the protection of women and children, providing free legal advice to victims and legal aid in courts, had proven to be successful in monitoring cases and providing follow-up in coordination with national agencies in dealing with health questions and criminal and judicial matters. At the international level, the city of Doha had hosted an international seminar on violence against women and its impact on the family in November 2008, with participation from United Nations agencies.

75. Qatar had taken a range of measures to address violence against women migrant workers, including by providing information for the report of the Secretary-General on national actions, through strengthening legal frameworks for addressing that issue and human trafficking and through institutional mechanisms to address the prevention, protection and assistance in relation to such violence. Several national agencies provided training for those working with victims, inter alia by familiarizing them with relevant international conventions.

76. In addition, Qatar was engaged in bilateral cooperation on employment, and continued to provide information to relevant United Nations organizations. Her country had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in April 2008 and would continue its efforts to promote women's empowerment as a strategic objective nationally and internationally. Finally, the relevant reports of the Secretary-General should give special attention to the plight of women and their families living under foreign occupation and the need to find urgent solutions to their plight.

77. **Mr. Rastam** (Malaysia) said that women played an important role in all spheres of society and that all countries had a responsibility to ensure that women could fulfil their potential in any given field. Instituting a gender perspective must continue to be promoted in the international context. States needed to overcome the institutional, traditional and other constraints impeding the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and other internationally agreed instruments. Gender stereotypes continued to be the real barriers to the overall goal of the advancement of women and, as such, merited discussion among the international community, as difficult as that exercise might be for policymakers and others.

78. Malaysia fully supported efforts towards creating a gender balance within the United Nations system and supported the Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women. His Government had a zero-tolerance policy towards that violence and adopted a holistic approach in addressing it, including by eliminating impunity and prosecuting perpetrators, as well as by providing protection and rehabilitation to victims. Since 2003, it had been implementing gender equality programmes and projects in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and recognized the important role that non-governmental

organizations played in complementing governmental efforts, as evidenced through its funding of NGOs for the implementation of activities and programmes for the advancement of women.

79. Malaysia was committed to realizing women's rights as human rights and had instituted changes in its legal and institutional frameworks in that respect. It had made progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goal 2, with 97 per cent of girls enrolled primary education, and female enrolment in higher education having risen to 60 per cent; Goal 3, as women now comprised more than 20 per cent of the heads of Government ministries, for example; and Goal 5 by reducing maternal mortality from 2.8 per 1,000 live births in 1957 to 0.3 in 2007. Although Malaysia had made strides in reducing malaria and other communicable diseases as part of Goal 6, HIV/AIDS still remained a challenge, especially in the light of the feminization of that disease.

80. Lastly, he stressed that all countries must forge a strong unified political message focusing on the entire spectrum of challenges affecting both developing and developed countries in order to achieve a successful outcome to the various events aimed at women's advancement scheduled for the following year.

81. **Ms. ter Haar** (Netherlands), speaking as a representative of Dutch women, said that women and girls were the best strategic target group to focus on towards achieving the MDGs and eradicating poverty. Sport and physical activity played an important role in the empowerment of women and gender equality. Participating in sport allowed women to develop mental and physical strength, self-confidence and new leadership skills and brought joy to their lives. It was a low-cost healthy and healing activity which could be implemented quickly, and the proper supervision of girls by committed coaches could help increase school participation.

82. Her Government encouraged young girls from migrant backgrounds to participate in sport through targeted financial incentives. That had enabled a group of 700 Muslim women, run by women for women, to become key agents in their local community and was a means of connecting with other communities. Practice had shown that sport was an effective means for reconciliation and dealing with trauma, as evidenced through a football team founded in the Netherlands by a Rwandan woman, which helped female Hutu and

Tutsi survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda to combat their trauma and leave the past behind. In Africa, sports infrastructure was a useful channel for educating girls about issues like disease, HIV/AIDS prevention and care and hygiene and sanitation issues and was a means to prevent further isolation of girls having to care for family members living with HIV. It was also a way to overcome stereotypes and issues of caste and class.

83. She drew the Committee's attention to article 13 (c) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and General Assembly resolution 63/135 pertaining to sport and proposed that nations should recognize the cycle of insecurity in women's lives and the need to enhance participation and integration through sport, acknowledge women's vulnerability to violence and the positive influence of sport, and work towards practical solutions to such problems through sport. Lastly, she welcomed the initiatives of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace and called on the Committee to help provide girls and women with equal access to resources and opportunities for participation in sport and to strengthen the role of sport in primary education.

84. **Mr. Merabet** (Algeria) said that his delegation supported General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence, which addressed the establishment of a composite entity for the empowerment of women. Considerable progress had been made in the world thanks to the ambitious commitments made by the international community for gender equality and empowering women mainly within the context of the Beijing Conference and the MDGs. Nevertheless, the multifaceted economic crisis would have repercussions on women's socio-economic situation and would be felt most immediately and disproportionately by poor rural women who would be the first to lose their already precarious jobs or slide into the informal economy. That made them more susceptible to abuse, violence, insecurity and disease, including HIV/AIDS.

85. It was thus imperative to incorporate a gender perspective into any national, regional or international action to combat the crisis and allocate funds and resources to promote gender equality and help women become autonomous. He welcomed the Doha Declaration in that context. The precarious situation resulting from the financial and economic crises posed

a double burden for developing countries, particularly in Africa, where special attention should be paid through support for the African Union's gender policy, plan of action and proposal for an African women's decade.

86. Algeria continued to make significant efforts in its pursuit of gender equality, including through its revised Constitution, the lifting of its reservation on article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and its amendment of the Algerian nationality code to recognize the Algerian nationality of children born to Algerian mothers. Women in Algeria had played a key role in achieving equality, and Algeria's President would continue to appoint women to key positions in his Administration and had called for the establishment of a commission to propose a draft law to help enhance the political participation of women in elected bodies.

87. **Ms. Hjartardóttir** (Iceland) said that, as women played a central role in economic and social development and strong links existed between their empowerment and poverty reduction, the advancement of women must be central to the work of the United Nations. Governments had the responsibility of safeguarding women and children from discrimination in the current economic and financial crisis. Concerted international cooperation was also needed to help combat the trafficking in women and girls, as the recession threatened to exacerbate such human rights violations. In that respect, Iceland had recently adopted a national action plan to combat such trafficking, which included measures to protect victims.

88. Women and girls remained subject to persistent and grave gender-based violence throughout the world and continued to be targets and victims of injustice, assault and sexual violence in armed conflicts and post-conflict situations. Impunity for atrocities committed against women and children must be adequately addressed. Her country reaffirmed its strong commitment to the urgent eradication of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and children.

89. It was important to see women as rights-holders rather than as a vulnerable group and to ensure them equal opportunities and participation in policy- and decision-making, especially relating to peace and conflict-resolution. In that respect, she hoped that

compliance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security would be enhanced and also draw attention to a range of related Security Council resolutions including 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009). Iceland would work towards the full implementation of those resolutions and the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and urged any States that had not yet signed and ratified the Convention to do so. Lastly, her country supported the establishment of a strong United Nations composite entity for gender equality headed by an Under-Secretary-General and urged the Secretary-General to proceed swiftly in that regard.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.



General Assembly

Sixty-fourth session

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Summary record of the 10th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 13 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Penke (Latvia)

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Agenda item 62: Advancement of women (*continued*)

- (a) Advancement of women (*continued*)
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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 61: Social development (continued)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (continued) (A/C.3/64/L.9)

Draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.9: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

1. **Mr. Hassan** (Sudan), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.9 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the resolution sought to advance the three objectives that had formed the three pillars of the World Summit for Social Development, focusing in particular on social integration, the priority theme chosen by the Commission for Social Development for its 2009-2010 session. It also included language from the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/157) and the outcome of the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development. The draft resolution invited the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a study on the impact of the converging world crises on social development. Lastly, it highlighted issues important to the sponsors, such as international cooperation, the role of the United Nations and Governments, and the creation of an enabling environment for social development. His delegation hoped that, following a constructive dialogue among Member States, the resolution would be adopted by consensus.

2. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) announced that Kyrgyzstan had become a sponsor of the draft resolution.

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (continued) (A/C.3/64/L.4, L.7, L.8 and L.10)

Draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.4: Policies and programmes involving youth

3. **Ms. Vaz Patto** (Portugal), speaking also on behalf of the Republic of Moldova and of Senegal, introduced draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.4, which followed on from resolution 62/126 of the General Assembly and resolution 47/1 of the Commission for

Social Development. In accordance with the report of the Secretary-General on the progress achieved with respect to the well-being of young people and their role in civil society, the draft resolution dealt with 11 of the 15 priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth, the other four areas having been addressed in 2007. Noting that the 15 areas were closely interrelated, she drew particular attention to paragraphs 14 and 15 of the text. The draft resolution acknowledged the positive contribution that youth representatives made to the work of the General Assembly and urged Member States to consider including youth representatives in their delegations, as youth participation would add value to the debate and negotiations on the matter. The sponsors had taken into account the positions of all Member States on the issues, some of which were complex, and hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

4. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) said that Chile wished to become a sponsor of the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.7: Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond

5. **Mr. Hassan** (Sudan) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.7 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Quoting from the third preambular paragraph and paragraph 1, he said that the draft resolution was aimed at ensuring the integration of a family perspective in social protection and at fostering intergenerational solidarity at the family and community level, as called for in the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/134). He thanked the Secretary-General for the timely reminder that the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family would take place in 2014 and noted that the draft resolution requested the Secretary-General to recommend to Members States appropriate ways to observe that anniversary. He hoped that the draft resolution, which was the subject of ongoing informal consultations, would be adopted by consensus.

6. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) announced that Kazakhstan and Thailand had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.8: Proclamation of 2010 as International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding

7. **Mr. Hassan** (Sudan), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.8 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, observed that youth faced many challenges as a result of the widening gap between North and South, growing poverty and rising xenophobia. At the same time, they could also play an important role in the development of their countries, a role that should be encouraged. Member States were therefore encouraged to continue taking steps to enable youth to exercise all their rights. Many young people were affected by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and HIV/AIDS. There was thus a clear need for Member States to renew their commitment to address such problems and to instil in youth values such as tolerance, rejection of violence and solidarity. To that end, the Group of 77 and China proposed that 2010 should be proclaimed the International Year of Youth and that a world youth conference should be organized under the auspices of the United Nations in order to give young people from around the world the opportunity to discuss youth issues. He hoped that the draft resolution, which was the subject of ongoing informal consultations, would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution: A/C.3/64/L.10: Cooperatives in social development

8. **Ms. Sodov** (Mongolia) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.10 on behalf of the sponsors, noting that Niger had also become a sponsor. As the Secretary-General had emphasized in his report, cooperatives offered a model of enterprise that was particularly relevant in the current context of economic and food crisis, inasmuch as they promoted the creation of businesses and productive employment and enhanced social inclusion and protection. Mongolia therefore proposed that the year 2012 should be proclaimed the International Year of Cooperatives with a view to encouraging Governments to promote the creation and development of cooperatives and inducing citizens to organize themselves into cooperatives as a means of addressing their economic needs. The initiative — which would not be a year of celebration, but rather one of work involving all stakeholders — would have no budgetary implications. Given the role they played in social and economic development, agricultural and financial cooperatives deserved special attention in the

current context. Re-emphasizing the potential benefits of cooperatives with respect to food security and access to credit and savings, she highlighted paragraphs 8 and 9 of the draft resolution and expressed the hope that it would be adopted by consensus.

9. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) said that Nicaragua had become a sponsor of the draft resolution.

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing
(continued) (A/C.3/64/L.6)

Draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.6: Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing

10. **Mr. Hassan** (Sudan), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.6 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the text built on General Assembly resolution 63/151 and incorporated suggestions from the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/127). He highlighted the requests made to Member States in paragraphs 1, 10, 12, 13 and 14 and drew attention to paragraph 22, which invited the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a comprehensive report on the current status of the social situation, well-being, development and rights of older persons, taking into consideration the discussions and conclusions of the forty-eighth session of the Commission for Social Development. He hoped that the draft resolution, which was still being discussed in ongoing informal consultations, would, as usual, be adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 104: Crime prevention and criminal justice (continued) (A/C.3/64/L.14)

Draft resolution A/C.3/64/L.14: United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

11. **Ms. Kafeero** (Uganda) introduced the draft resolution (A/C.3/64/L.14) on behalf of its sponsors. The text, which was based on General Assembly resolution 63/196 and was still the subject of informal consultations, had undergone several technical and substantive revisions. The third and fifth preambular paragraphs had been modified in the light of the Secretary-General's report (A/64/121) and several paragraphs had been added, notably the fourth preambular paragraph, which acknowledged the effects of climate change on agricultural production in the

countries of Africa and underlined the link between poverty and crime. Two new paragraphs welcomed the initiatives undertaken by the United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, despite its difficult financial situation. The Group of African States recognized that Africa could not ignore the importance of new crime trends and needed to strengthen its criminal justice systems. It called upon the General Assembly to highlight the need for continued support of the Institute's activities. Her delegation hoped that the draft resolution would, as in the past, be adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 62: Advancement of women (continued)
(A/64/38)

(a) **Advancement of women (continued)** (A/64/79-E/2009/74, A/64/151, A/64/152, A/64/164, A/64/190 and A/64/342)

(b) **Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (continued)** (A/64/218)

12. **Ms. Aitimova** (Kazakhstan) said that her Government attached great importance to the creation of a new composite entity to deal with gender issues and was confident that the new entity would enhance protection of the rights and interests of women, promote system-wide gender mainstreaming and contribute actively to fund-raising for a key aspect of development. Highlighting the need to enhance the coherence and efficiency of efforts across the United Nations system by giving the entity a clear mandate, she expressed the hope that it would build on the best practices of the United Nations bodies previously responsible for the advancement of women so as to achieve further progress. Her delegation fully supported the Secretary-General's campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women", believing that it was important to create a robust knowledge base in order to put a stop to the phenomenon. The stakeholders should translate words into action. Convinced of the potential of the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, her Government had made its first contribution to the Fund. It had also implemented the provisions of various international instruments aimed at stemming domestic violence and expected to adopt a law on the matter in the near future.

13. Kazakhstan welcomed the numerous initiatives undertaken by the international community to combat human trafficking and sexual exploitation. It was committed to modernizing its legislation and, with the assistance of non-governmental organizations, was providing support for victims of trafficking. It was also strengthening its criminal justice system in order to ensure that the perpetrators of such crimes did not go unpunished. Believing that it was crucial to strengthen the role of women in society, her Government continued to provide support for mothers and was working to ensure equal economic opportunities for women through capacity-building in entrepreneurship and through credit facilities. Kazakhstan considered the achievement of gender equality and the advancement of women no less important than global safety and sustainable development and pledged its full support for United Nations initiatives towards that end.

14. **Mr. Pournajaf** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that despite the conclusions of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the gap between international legal obligations and their implementation persisted. An action plan for mainstreaming gender in the area of justice should be adopted. To that end, it would be necessary to identify and respond to women's needs.

15. Many challenges remained to be addressed in order to meet those needs: for example, assessing the impact of the crisis on women, achieving a work-life balance, and mitigating the effects of climate change on agriculture and water management — two tasks that were traditionally performed by women — in rural areas. The issue of human trafficking for prostitution must also be addressed, as must other forms of exploitation that constituted modern forms of slavery, by giving women economic opportunities in their countries and by establishing channels to enable them to migrate legally.

16. Armed conflicts, natural disasters and reconstruction efforts put women in situations of vulnerability, which increased their risk of violence and exploitation. Gender imbalances were seldom addressed in the wake of conflicts or humanitarian crises, as a result of which existing disparities were deepened or new ones created. Women's economic and social rights must be upheld in order to promote their empowerment and prevent violence against them. The formulation of a universal law aimed at preventing and combating domestic violence seemed a promising means of strengthening legal protection for women, but

the challenge was to bridge the gap between the establishment of a normative framework and its implementation.

17. Recognizing the need for concerted action, his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's global campaign to eliminate violence against women and supported the proposal to appoint a new Under-Secretary-General who would be responsible for overseeing gender justice activities across the United Nations system.

18. **Ms. Mwaffisi** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her Government was fully committed to the attainment of gender equality and the empowerment of women and had continued to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly through its national policies and programmes. Her country had made significant strides with respect to women's empowerment. Notable examples included the achievement of gender parity in primary education enrolment, a significant increase in female students at the secondary and tertiary levels and the abolition of school fees. With regard to the participation of women in decision-making, 30 per cent of public service posts and parliamentary seats were currently held by women. In order to promote the economic empowerment of women, support was being provided for microenterprise financing and a women's bank had been established to provide loans to women.

19. With a view to ending violence against women, her Government had ratified a number of international human rights instruments, enacted new laws on sexual crimes and trafficking in human beings, and established a national plan for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and children. In addition, in response to the Secretary-General's call to action, a national campaign to stop violence against women had been launched. As most rural women depended on agriculture for their livelihood, it was imperative to reverse the neglect of agricultural development in both official development assistance and government spending and to make productive resources available to women. Her country had enacted several laws aimed at ensuring women's access to land and improving their representation in land tribunals and village councils.

20. The creation of a strong gender entity with strong field presence would provide support for Member States' efforts. Her delegation therefore welcomed the

General Assembly's decision to create a composite gender entity within the United Nations. The upcoming reviews of the Millennium Development Goals and of the Beijing Declaration and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, as well as the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, all of which would take place in 2010, would provide opportunities for taking stock of achievements and charting the way forward in furthering gender equality and women's empowerment.

21. **Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) said that her Government was committed to upholding women's rights and achieving equality of opportunity for men and women. It was actively pursuing the objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Those and other international instruments to which her country was a party had served as the frame of reference for the formulation of domestic legislation and policies and for the implementation of programmes in that area. Nicaragua had a national development plan, a social welfare system and a gender equality policy, and had established an institute to oversee gender mainstreaming in national institutions. To promote women's participation in Government decision-making and increase their presence in public service positions, a 50 per cent quota for women had been introduced in all Government institutions and was slated to be extended to other public agencies as well. To curb violence against women, a gender violence unit had been established within the Office of the Public Prosecutor. That unit was responsible for ensuring the effective administration of justice for women and girls. In addition, training had been provided to national officials with a view to eliminating gender-based discrimination in the administration of criminal justice, and the national police had carried out prevention and support activities for women and girls who had suffered domestic violence or sexual abuse. Women now had access to free education and health care, and the country had seen a marked decline in maternal mortality. To promote equal opportunities and eliminate discrimination in employment, steps were being taken to prohibit the practice of requiring women to undergo a pregnancy test as part of the job application process and to inform women of their rights and of the provisions of international instruments that protected them against discrimination in the workplace.

22. Serious problems persisted at the international level, including violence against women migrants from the South. Nicaragua found it most regrettable that the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families had been ratified by only 40 States and concurred with the view expressed in the Secretary-General's report on violence against women migrant workers (A/64/152) that States should ensure the protection of the human rights of all women migrant workers and comprehensively address violence against them through measures to prevent violence, prosecute perpetrators and protect and support victims. Trafficking in women, a modern form of slavery, was an issue of concern for Nicaragua and it was therefore one of the countries working to draw up a global plan of action to combat that scourge.

23. **Ms. Sabja Daza** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the situation of women in her country remained difficult, particularly in rural areas, where indigenous women still bore a heavy burden of household and agricultural work and were subjected to various forms of discrimination and segregation. Nevertheless, significant progress had been made in recent years with respect to gender equality. The principle according to which the only useful work was paid work should be re-examined, and the important role of domestic work in the functioning of the economy and society should be recognized, as should women's contribution to the development of their countries.

24. Her country's new Constitution enshrined women's rights as inalienable and indivisible and as an integral aspect of universal human rights, and placed great emphasis on principles of gender equality, elimination of entrenched patterns of discrimination and promotion of women's participation in all facets of political life. It also guaranteed the right to a life with dignity and freedom from violence, and gave women access to all levels of education, provided for improvements in the health and social security systems and established new principles regarding ownership of land and natural resources. Significant progress had been made with respect to women's participation in political life. All political parties were now required to include equal numbers of men and women on their candidate lists, a quota for women had also been established for the Constituent Assembly and several indigenous women had been appointed to posts in the Administration of President Morales. In the area of

health, the new Constitution guaranteed the right to safe motherhood and free maternity care, and a mother-child allowance had been instituted in order to reduce maternal and infant mortality and undernutrition; 510,000 people would receive that subsidy in 2009.

25. Member States should continue their discussions concerning the creation of a new United Nations gender entity, which would make it possible to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in an integrated and comprehensive manner and facilitate gender mainstreaming in the activities of all United Nations agencies and institutions.

26. **Ms. Hong Wook-jin** (Republic of Korea) said that while much progress had been made towards realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women in recent years, numerous women and girls around the world continued to suffer discrimination and violence. As 2010 would mark the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, and the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, it would be an appropriate time to review achievements and identify remaining gaps and challenges. As the Secretary-General had pointed out in his reports on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/64/190) and on violence against women migrant workers (A/64/152), more vigorous initiatives should be undertaken to meet the needs of women in situations of vulnerability. Her country had received many women migrants in recent years, which had prompted the Government to put in place social mechanisms aimed at ensuring respect for their human rights, protecting them from discrimination and violence and facilitating their integration into Korean society.

27. Noting that women were disproportionately affected by the consequences of major global challenges such as conflict and climate change, she welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolutions 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009), which called for an increase in the number of women in high-level positions within the United Nations, especially in peacekeeping operations. Her delegation believed that States' success in overcoming global challenges depended largely on the capacity of the United Nations system to make gender equality and women's empowerment a reality, and

therefore looked forward to the early establishment of a composite gender entity.

28. **Ms. Shira Hyun-ju** (Republic of Korea), speaking as a youth delegate of her country, said that environmental degradation was a growing threat to women, that they should be actively involved in the quest for global solutions to the problem and that gender equality should be recognized as an essential condition for the creation of an environmentally sustainable society. The current global financial crisis was threatening the progress made towards gender equality in the labour market and more must be done to assist the 10 to 22 million women who were at risk of losing their jobs before the end of 2009. Her Government, aware of the difficulties that women faced in striking a balance between family life and a professional career, had introduced a plan for promoting gender equality in employment and achieving work-life balance.

29. **Ms. Stefan** (Liechtenstein) said that investment in gender equality was investment in progress and that the empowerment of women was a precondition for development. Nevertheless, owing to ongoing discrimination and inequality, women remained disproportionately affected by poverty, hunger and food insecurity. She looked forward to the early establishment of the new composite gender entity, which would help consolidate the progress made to date and create synergies in order to improve the Organization's contribution to the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of all forms of violence against women. Such violence was an unacceptable violation of human rights that often went unpunished. Such impunity sent the message that male violence against women was inevitable. States therefore had an obligation to ensure that legal instruments relating to the protection of women's rights were implemented.

30. Her Government was deeply concerned about the increase in sexual violence in conflict situations around the world, notably in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Such violence was not just a by-product of hostilities; it was a method of warfare, and it persisted even after the conflict ended. It was essential to increase the participation of women in leadership positions in conflict resolution and peace processes, and her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to appoint more women to such positions. Noting that countries often lacked the resources to bring the perpetrators of acts of violence to justice and

that conflict resolution mechanisms were often applied in a discriminatory manner which limited women's access to justice, she welcomed Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), which called on the Secretary-General to offer expertise to assist national authorities in strengthening the rule of law. She underscored the need to protect and support victims and highlighted the role that the International Criminal Court might play in that regard and in ending impunity.

31. **Ms. Lakhova** (Russian Federation), speaking as a member of the legislative assembly of the Russian Federation and vice-chairperson of the legislative committee for labour and social policy and as a representative of the Women's Union of Russia, said that the basic documents of the United Nations on gender equality formed the basis for her country's policies aimed at improving the situation of women. Those documents had been the starting point for a profound transformation of Russian society and institutions and had encouraged the participation of civil society in activities in that area. The principle of gender equality was enshrined in the main legal instruments of the Russian Federation, including the Constitution and federal laws.

32. Her country's socio-economic development programmes contained a broad range of measures that had a direct bearing on the interests of women. Despite the economic crisis, matters relating to people and to the protection of mothers and children were now more than ever a central priority for the Russian Government. The democratic system recently introduced in the Russian Federation was based on the active participation of society as a whole. Current legislation enabled civil society organizations to play a role in political life, and women were well represented in the structures of the executive and legislative branches, including the State Duma, where they held 14 per cent of seats, and the Government, where they headed three key ministries.

33. As part of its labour policy, the Government ensured the protection of women, especially in the education, culture and health-care sectors. Thanks to its support for small and medium-size enterprises and for self-employment among women, the Russian Federation was now the third-ranked country in the world in terms of employment of women in business.

34. Progress towards gender equality would not be possible without the active participation of civil society. The Women's Union of Russia was working

tirelessly to change attitudes with regard to equality, protection of women's rights, education of children and strengthening of families by striving to raise gender awareness among the various social groups and engaging political leaders in constructive dialogue. In cooperation with other organizations, it was pursuing activities to promote gender equality, protect mothers and children and combat violence, alcoholism and substance abuse, drawing the attention of the authorities, the public and the media to those social issues, which affected society as a whole. Much remained to be done in order to achieve equality, however, and only through close cooperation with international organizations and the future United Nations composite entity for gender issues would women be able to take control of their destiny.

35. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that her country had mainstreamed gender in the policies set out in its National Development Plan 2006-2010. The Office of the Presidential Advisor on Gender Equity played a leading role in activities for the advancement of women. In order to put a stop to violence against women, it was important to strengthen legal and institutional frameworks and raise public awareness of the issue. With that in mind, her Government had taken steps to facilitate women's access to justice and help them defend their rights and, in 2004, had established a gender equality observatory to monitor progress in the fight against gender-based discrimination.

36. Colombia supported the view that it was important to incorporate a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance activities and in demobilization and disarmament processes, protecting women from domestic violence and promoting their economic self-sufficiency and their participation in civic life.

37. Strategies for poverty eradication and promotion of entrepreneurship and labour market access should also incorporate a gender perspective. Colombia had mainstreamed gender into its microcredit schemes and its "Families in Action" programme, which served 2.5 million households, providing subsidies directly to mothers, subject to their fulfilment of commitments with respect to child nutrition and education.

38. The United Nations system had an important role to play in protecting the rights of migrant women. Recalling that her country had recently joined other States in sponsoring two Human Rights Council resolutions relating to the advancement of women, she

expressed the hope that the new gender entity would be established during the current session and would be allocated adequate political, technical and financial means to enable it to work effectively for the advancement of women all over the world.

39. **Ms. Picco** (Monaco) said that she looked forward to the early appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the issue of sexual violence in armed conflict, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), of which her country had been a sponsor. She was confident that the Secretary-General would also promptly appoint an Under-Secretary-General to head the new gender entity, which should be established as soon as possible and which would have the noble task of defending the human rights of women and girls.

40. Her Government was taking action in that respect not only nationally, through provisions aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women and support mechanisms for victims, but also in the framework of its international cooperation. In several African countries, for example, some 400,000 women were receiving maternal and child health services in facilities financed by the Government of Monaco.

41. **Mr. Valero Briceño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country was building a new model of development that was people-centred and aimed at ensuring equality of men and women. It also had a wide array of legislative instruments designed to combat gender-based discrimination, including laws that ensured safe working conditions for women and, in the domestic sphere, their right to a life without violence. Venezuela was a party to the Inter-American Convention for the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women and since July 2008 had chaired the monitoring mechanism of that unique instrument. Since 2008, special courts had been established throughout the country to hear cases involving violence against women. His Government also attached fundamental importance to the problem of trafficking in women, which it was tackling through an integrated approach that sought to eliminate the root causes, especially poverty.

42. Gender-parity rules established for all elections had enabled more women to hold high-level office, and the current presidents of the National Assembly and Supreme Court were women. Under the aegis of the Ministry of the People's Power for Women and Gender Equality, several institutions providing services for

women had been created, including a specialized development bank that provided loans at discounted rates to women's cooperatives.

43. **Ms. Sow** (Senegal), highlighting the crucial role of women in development and the need for their equitable participation in decision-making, observed that women were still underrepresented in the economic sphere and that Millennium Development Goal 3 would not be achieved by 2015. Gender must be mainstreamed in development policies.

44. Senegal had always included the advancement of women in its overall development policies. It had ratified all international conventions on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and on the rights of children, including girls, and had included in its new Constitution provisions guaranteeing equality of men and women, including with respect to land ownership, education and employment. A law against female genital mutilation and violence against women had been in effect since 1999, and an observatory on family rights, including a component on the rights of women, had been established. Several national and local initiatives for women had helped to increase school enrolment among girls and reduce illiteracy significantly. Flexible and accessible credit programmes had helped combat poverty by supporting economic activity among women.

45. **Ms. Sudhidhance** (Thailand) said that her country had fulfilled its obligations under the major instruments relating to women's rights. She commended the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which was helping countries to achieve their gender equality goals, and noted that Ms. Chutikul, nominated by Thailand and elected a member of the Committee for the period 2007-2010, was advising a working group of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on the establishment of a commission for the protection and promotion of women's and children's rights.

46. Thailand had implemented a development plan that sought to protect the rights of women and promote their participation in economic and social development. It was working actively to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including the goal for the elimination of poverty among women. Gender equality was enshrined in the Thai Constitution, and the Government was working to overcome regulatory, economic and cultural barriers to the advancement of

women. Thai women had won the right to retain their maiden names after marriage and could choose to enter a wide spectrum of occupations, including jobs related to peacekeeping. Increasing numbers of women were participating in public administration at the national and local levels.

47. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) reaffirmed her Government's commitment to the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and said that it had taken steps to address the 12 critical areas identified in the Beijing Platform for Action with a view to promoting the political, economic, cultural and social empowerment of Syrian women. After analysing the features of poverty in the country, a public agency had developed a comprehensive national strategy for combating poverty and empowering women, particularly in rural areas.

48. As a result of the implementation of its five-year plan for 2005-2010, the tenth such plan, the Syrian Arab Republic had succeeded in narrowing the gender gap in primary education and in increasing women's representation in the legislative, executive and administrative spheres. The Government accorded priority to economic and social development and allocated funds for the advancement of women, applying a gender perspective.

49. The Syrian Arab Republic was working to achieve the liberation of the occupied Golan and to put an end to the suffering of women living under Israeli occupation, which was hindering economic development by forcing the Syrian Government to allocate part of its budget to military objectives rather than to promoting the empowerment of women, reducing gender inequalities and fostering socio-economic progress. Her Government favoured a comprehensive approach to the elimination of all forms of violence against women through the adoption of plans compatible with the conditions in each country.

50. **Ms. Bobi Assa** (Côte d'Ivoire), outlining the measures taken by her Government to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, said that gender equality had been enshrined in the first Constitution of Côte d'Ivoire and remained a fundamental principle. The Directorate of Gender Equality and Mainstreaming within the Ministry of the Family, Women and Social Affairs, supported by gender units within most other ministries, was

responsible for implementing that principle. Côte d'Ivoire had incorporated the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women into its domestic law, and a national strategy to end gender-based violence had been formulated in December 2008 with a view to harmonizing and coordinating the efforts of various entities, such as the victims' centres recently established in Yamoussoukro, Man and Abidjan and the legal assistance services offered by the Association of Women Lawyers of Côte d'Ivoire.

51. The country's poverty reduction strategy paper (2009-2015) also addressed issues relating to women.

52. As part of its national plan of action for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), her Government was encouraging women to participate actively in the peace process currently under way and had recently organized a training workshop on women and peace and security.

53. **Mr. Jeenbaev** (Kyrgyzstan) said that his country had adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Nevertheless, the practice of bride abduction continued, generally involving girls between 16 and 18 years of age. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, following its examination of his Government's third periodic report, had said in its concluding observations that marriage of girls under the age of 18 violated article 16, paragraph 2, of the Convention. Forced marriage was not a Kyrgyz tradition, although it was sometimes perceived as such. A parliamentary committee had examined the issue and held parliamentary hearings on 3 March 2009, during which lawmakers had spoken in favour of raising the minimum marriageable age to 18 years, although it had been agreed that marriage at 17 years could be permitted in exceptional cases. The Family Code established that marriage between a man and a woman was voluntary and gave the spouses equal rights.

54. Both non-governmental organizations and Government agencies were working to reduce the number of bride abductions, but those efforts remained insufficient. To fulfil the country's international obligations, legislators had put forward draft legislation establishing quotas for women in the national audit office, the Administration and financial institutions.

55. **Ms. Werdaningtyas** (Indonesia) said that adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination against Women had helped to frame her country's efforts to eliminate violence against women, who were the pillar of development. Indonesia had adopted a long-term plan aimed at encouraging the participation of women in economic development and had incorporated a gender perspective in its budgeting processes. It was also encouraging the participation of women in political life and, following the elections of April 2009, the number of women holding legislative office had nearly doubled. In the economic sphere, the number of women entrepreneurs had increased and, thanks to a cooperatives programme, women had greater access to credit, especially in rural areas.

56. In recent years, there had been a marked feminization of the labour force, with a parallel increase in informal work and migration, which had led to high levels of insecurity among migrant workers, two thirds of whom were women, who were vulnerable to violence. Steps had been taken at the regional and international levels to improve the situation of all migrant workers. Her Government sought to ensure their safety abroad through advocacy. It had also established national legal frameworks and a task force on human trafficking with a view to protecting migrant workers. It had invited countries of destination to enter into mutually beneficial agreements and was working with the International Labour Organization to train national officials in the protection of migrant workers.

57. Her delegation had noted progress in the advancement of women, but was of the view that the international community should, in the long term, increase women's involvement in decision-making by ensuring that they received an education, enabling them to participate in non-agricultural activities and encouraging microfinance and microcredit in order to eradicate poverty, particularly in rural areas. Lastly, with regard to violence against women migrant workers, there was a need to heighten awareness, adopt preventive measures, particularly in the legal realm, and strengthen collaboration between countries.

58. **Ms. Suleiman** (Nigeria) said that debt relief had contributed to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through, for example, the establishment of poverty reduction strategies such as the Women's Fund for Economic Empowerment, which, in partnership with the Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank, provided loans to women's cooperatives. To promote entrepreneurship among women and facilitate access to credit, Nigeria

had established the Business Development Fund for Women. The educational level of women had improved, as had the net enrolment rate at the primary level, thanks to a national education policy, increased budgetary allocations and the establishment of numerous training centres across the country.

59. Women were playing a growing role in the ongoing political reform process in Nigeria. Under the aegis of a coalition of women's groups, women's organizations were mobilizing leaders, gender experts, legal practitioners and scholars to advocate for improvement in the conduct of elections. A policy of affirmative action for women aimed at reducing the gender gap in key leadership positions had increased the number of women in such positions. Nearly one quarter of senior public officials and nearly one third of judges were women.

60. Her Government had put in place a national policy on sexual harassment in educational institutions. Civil society organizations and the media had joined forces in the quest to ensure a society free of violence against women. Women who had suffered domestic violence or sexual abuse could seek refuge in temporary shelters, where they received free medical care. Penalties were meted out to perpetrators of rape. Judges and magistrates were receiving continuing education on women's rights, and some discriminatory administrative provisions had been declared unconstitutional.

61. Progress had been made, but there were still gaps. Increased technical and financial support from development partners would be key to achieving the advancement of women. Nigeria supported the creation of a composite gender entity.

62. **Ms. Al-Zibdeh** (Jordan) welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/311, which called for the creation of a composite gender entity. The establishment of that entity would enable Member States to strengthen the protection of women's rights around the world.

63. Jordan had withdrawn its reservation in respect of article 15, paragraph 4, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which concerned the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile. It supported the Secretary-General's campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women" (2008-2015). A national committee responsible for the advancement

and empowerment of women had been set up and an ombudsman's office had been established in Jordan to investigate and address complaints lodged by women, particularly those relating to oppression, discrimination and violence in all its forms. Referring to the anniversary of the various international instruments, she said that much had been accomplished, but much also remained to be done.

64. The issue of gender spanned numerous different areas, whence the interest of all United Nations agencies in strengthening the protection of women's rights. Her delegation looked forward to the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on those issues and believed that women yearned for concrete action rather than promises.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.



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Sixty-fourth session

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Summary record of the 11th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 13 October 2009, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Pérez (Vice-Chairperson) (Peru)

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In the absence of Mr. Penke (Latvia), Mr. Pérez (Peru), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 62: Advancement of women (continued)
(A/64/38)

(a) Advancement of women (continued) (A/64/79-E/2009/74; A/64/151, 152, 164, 190 and 342)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (continued) (A/64/218)

1. **Ms. Horsington** (Australia), speaking on behalf of the CANZ group (Australia, Canada and New Zealand), stressed that gender equality was a fundamental human right. Women's full participation in economic, social and political life was a key factor in reducing poverty, enhancing economic growth and democratic governance and increasing the well-being of women, girls and their families. The CANZ group reaffirmed their commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome of Beijing+5, the Cairo Programme of Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women had been recognized in Millennium Development Goal 3, and the empowerment of women in itself was an essential means for achieving all the Millennium Development Goals.

2. Millennium Development Goal 5 on improving maternal health was the goal on which there had been the least progress. She deplored the fact that every year more than 500,000 women died during pregnancy and childbirth, deaths which were in large part preventable. That was a serious human rights issue and she recalled States' commitments made in the Cairo Declaration on Population and Development. The CANZ group welcomed Human Rights Council resolution 11/8 on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights, the increased coordination between donors on funding for maternal health and morbidity, and the positive roles played in that area by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

3. She looked forward to the fifteen-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to be undertaken by the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2010 and called on Member States to seize that opportunity to renew their commitment to implementation of the Platform. In the context of the Beijing+15 process, she strongly supported the consolidation of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women into a composite entity led by an Under-Secretary-General as proposed in General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence and looked forward to early recruitment of a strong and dynamic candidate.

4. Lastly, despite progress made, full gender equality had not yet been achieved. It was time for Member States to adopt measures to further improve the status of women, in particular their safety, well-being and status in society and for both men and women to work together to achieve gender equality that would be of benefit to everyone.

5. **Mr. Samarasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that the Secretary-General's Unite to End Violence against Women campaign and the proposed creation of a consolidated gender entity within the Organization constituted major progress in the Organization's efforts to empower women. Continued violence against women, including sexual violence and female genital mutilation, early marriage and human trafficking, were matters that needed to be addressed urgently. He called for the creation of a global fund and high-level support in that regard.

6. The Constitution of Sri Lanka guaranteed equal rights to men and women, and a Women's Charter that reflected the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had also been promulgated. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment promoted social and economic empowerment programmes for Sri Lankan women. Impressive gains had been made: Sri Lanka was ranked 36th on the Gender Development Index by the United Nations Human Development Report 2009 and 12th on the United Nations Index on Equal Opportunities. Women's life expectancy was 79, and maternal and infant mortality rates were comparable to those of the

developed countries. Increasing numbers of women were entering higher education, and the representation of women in politics, the judiciary and the civil service was increasing. Training and self-employment programmes had been implemented to help women generate income for their families and become entrepreneurs, and credit schemes had been introduced to help rural women. As a result, women comprised 35 per cent of the labour force.

7. He said that 48 per cent of Sri Lankan migrant workers were women, and his delegation considered combating violence against women migrant workers, including especially vulnerable undocumented women workers, to be a priority. Sri Lanka welcomed the United Nations system's efforts to strengthen contractual arrangements, supervise recruitment agencies, conduct information campaigns and encourage Member States to implement relevant legislation. His Government had negotiated bilateral agreements with several countries to ensure the welfare and protection of Sri Lankan migrant workers.

8. His Government had initiated special post-conflict programmes in the north and east of the country to assist women, some of whom had been forcibly recruited combatants, had become single parents or had lost all or some of their children. Women represented more than 50 per cent of the population in centres for the internally displaced; the welfare of women and children was therefore a priority in the conflict recovery process. Sri Lanka was committed to meeting the needs of women affected by the conflict and helping them become involved in peacebuilding within their communities. Counselling centres had, for example, been set up to provide psychosocial support to displaced women and girls.

9. The Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights was preparing a National Plan of Action for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, in particular the rights of women, in keeping with the recommendation made by the Human Rights Council the previous year. His Government would continue its efforts to improve the status of women and mainstream a gender perspective in policies and programmes.

10. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia) said that his Government was committed to gender equality and had made significant strides in the promotion of the rights of women. Thanks to the 1997 National Gender Policy, more than 30 per cent of members of Parliament were

women, surpassing the Southern African Development Community (SADC) target. Some 45 per cent of the members of regional government councils were women, and the SADC target of 50 per cent for women parliamentarians by 2015 would certainly be reached.

11. In order to correct inequalities attributable to cultural practices, a number of laws had been enacted to protect the rights of women and other vulnerable groups, including the Married Persons Equality Act, the Affirmative Action Act, the Communal Land Reform Act, the Combating of Rape Act and the Combating of Domestic Violence Act. A central registry for communal land rights had been established in 2007 and showed that, to date, 45 per cent of land rights registered belonged to women, evidence of improvement in the status of women thanks to the reforms undertaken.

12. Violence against women continued to be a concern, with over 11,600 acts of violence reported in 2008 alone. A national gender-based violence database system had been put into place to monitor the situation and assist the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare in implementing focused interventions. That system was being strengthened with the financial assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). His Government was participating in the Secretary-General's Unite to End Violence against Women campaign and in July had launched a media campaign on zero tolerance for gender-based violence, including human trafficking. A report on human trafficking in Namibia would soon be published.

13. Namibia cooperated with regional and international partners to ensure that women enjoyed the same rights as men, and it supported the major relevant instruments and programmes in that field. Furthermore, his Government had ensured that women were well represented in the security forces, as called for in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

14. Despite his country's efforts, such factors as the worsening HIV/AIDS situation, the financial and economic crisis, human trafficking and climate change continued to be obstacles to the advancement of women. Climate change and the food and energy crises in particular had worsened the situation of women in Namibia. Rural areas were especially vulnerable to food insecurity because of low agricultural productivity, low incomes and limited off-farm

employment opportunities. That situation was exacerbated by the low involvement of women in decision-making relating to environmental management. The international community must continue to assist Namibia in its efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change and develop environmental management programmes for women.

15. **Mr. Monterrey Suay** (El Salvador) said that 53 per cent of the population of El Salvador were women. There was consensus in society on the important role that women played in socio-economic development and on the need to improve the status of women as a factor in reducing poverty and child mortality and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Currently as many girls as boys attended primary school, but girls outnumbered boys at the intermediate and higher levels. Despite progress made, however, 18.3 per cent of women and 12.8 per cent of men aged 15 or more were illiterate.

16. In the area of employment, increased technical training had provided women with greater opportunities for better paying administrative and civil service jobs, including positions of authority. Women, nevertheless, continued to make up 80 per cent of domestic workers and 73 per cent of those employed in assembly plants. Men's income was on average 14.92 per cent higher than women's.

17. Much, therefore, remained to be done to ensure women's full enjoyment of their rights and socio-economic development, in particular in such areas as violence against women, employment, participation in politics, human trafficking and migrant workers. His Government intended to implement a strategy focused on three priorities: making gender equality a reality, increasing the national capacity to carry out its international commitments, and strengthening the national infrastructure for the advancement of women.

18. Gender equality was the key to empowering women, which was itself essential for sustainable development and the strengthening of democracy. National and international efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, many of which were inextricably linked to gender issues, must therefore be redoubled. He commended the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) for its work. The Institute's role should be strengthened, and he looked forward to the

appointment of a new Executive Director as soon as possible. The empowerment of women strengthened societies and had positive effects on such areas as education, health and development. His Government remained committed to implementing international agreements aimed at improving the lives of its citizens, both men and women, in the firm belief that social justice was the foundation of democracy, development and poverty eradication.

19. **Ms. Štiglic** (Slovenia) commended the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for its exemplary work and underscored her Government's determination to intensify efforts to empower women, which required commitment on the part of men as well as women. Given the importance of integrating a comprehensive gender perspective into the Organization's work, she welcomed the decision to establish a composite gender entity within the United Nations system.

20. While the United Nations had been a constant ally of women in setting legal standards and devising policies to eliminate discrimination against women, many commitments had not been met by the international community. Protecting women's rights through laws and policies was especially important in the economic downturn. She therefore welcomed the prominence given to women's rights by the Human Rights Council, which reflected a growing will to eliminate gender-based discrimination.

21. Violence against women and girls remained a concern, and she expressed support for the Secretary-General's campaign *Unite to End Violence against Women* and Security Council resolution 1888 (2009) on sexual violence against women and children in situations of armed conflict. Slovenia likewise encouraged all States to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which identified forms of sexual violence in conflict situations as a crime against humanity and a war crime.

22. Her Government had introduced laws and policy measures to promote equal participation by women in decision-making, yet challenges remained. Every effort, for example, was being made to combat the stereotypes that hindered the advancement of women. In order to address the problem of violence against women, including domestic violence, the new Penal Code, in force since November 2008, defined domestic violence as a separate offence and the Domestic

Violence Prevention Act had been adopted in February 2009. A national programme to prevent domestic violence had been launched in 2009, and awareness-raising and training activities were being developed for all relevant actors with a view to making violence against women socially and morally unacceptable.

23. **Ms. Banzon-Abalos** (Philippines) said that her Government's commitment to the empowerment of women had led to the adoption in August 2009 of a Magna Carta of Women to enshrine in law recognition of the role of women in nation-building and their equal rights with men and to eliminate discrimination against women in all spheres of life. Pursuant to that instrument, mandatory training in human rights and gender sensitivity was provided to Government agents involved in protecting women from violence and women were guaranteed the right to have offenders brought to justice.

24. The situation of the 50 per cent of Philippine migrant workers who were women was of special concern. Many worked in the informal service and domestic sectors and suffered gross human rights violations. Women workers had also been the hardest hit by the current financial and economic crises and were subject to increased violence, especially in so-called free trade or export-processing zones, where they were hired on temporary or insecure contracts. Her delegation would submit a draft resolution on violence against women migrant workers to draw attention to that problem. It welcomed the completion by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women of general recommendation No. 26 on women migrant workers and urged all States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to take into account that general recommendation, including in their periodic reports to that Committee.

25. Turning to the issue of gender sensitivity in disaster response, she noted that most of those affected by the typhoon that had struck the Philippines in September 2009 were women and children. Her country thanked the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the international community for their rapid response. Addressing gender needs in disaster situations was not just a matter of protection or a human rights issue but also required increasing the efficiency, quality and sustainability of relief efforts.

26. The United Nations must be made stronger and more efficient if it was to deliver on its programme and financial commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Her delegation, therefore, welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence and would work to ensure the rapid establishment of a composite entity for gender issues within the Organization. That entity should be responsive to the needs of Member States and to women's organizations and provide leadership in marshalling resources for gender initiatives and ensuring that goals were achieved at all levels.

27. **Mr. Pak Tok Hun** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) stressed the importance of women's issues for the promotion of human rights in general and welcomed discussion of that topic in the context of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. His Government was committed to women's rights; even before the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 1948, his country had promulgated the Decree on Gender Equality in 1946. Currently women enjoyed equality in all spheres of public and social life and their situation improved with each passing day. His delegation would continue to actively support the efforts of the international community to promote women's rights.

28. He recalled that, in the first half of the twentieth century, Japan had taken almost 200,000 teenage girls and married women from his and other Asian countries to make them sexual slaves for the Japanese army, violating their human rights and often costing them their lives. Japan had a legal and moral obligation to make an apology and provide compensation for that crime yet unlike other countries still had not done so.

29. Certain Western countries had described as criminal the use by Japan of "comfort women" and even the parliament of its closest ally had urged the adoption of an international convention to define that crime as a crime against humanity and punish those involved. He urged Japan to follow the example of other countries and make a sincere apology and compensate for its past actions.

30. **Mr. Nhleko** (Swaziland) said that his Government was committed to meeting its international commitments and empowering women at all levels of society. It was a party to most regional and subregional instruments, including the Southern

African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development. Its 25-year National Development Strategy of 1997, called Vision 2022, provided a comprehensive socio-economic policy framework that included gender equality. The Gender Coordination Unit of the Ministry of Home Affairs had been transferred to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in order to strengthen gender mainstreaming.

31. National development would not be possible without strengthening the situation of rural women, but rural women were disproportionately affected by the current economic, food and energy crises and climate change. In an effort to assist them his Government had implemented such programmes as the Gone Rural handicraft programme to provide women with home-based work and the Swazi Secrets natural products company that observed fair trade and environmental criteria. A number of savings and credit cooperatives also catered to the financial needs of women.

32. He welcomed the Secretary-General's Unite to End Violence against Women and looked forward to reports from stakeholders on progress made. His Government strongly condemned violence against women. The Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Bill currently before Parliament would soon be adopted, and a Sexual Offences Unit had been established to provide comprehensive care for women and child victims. He thanked the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for its support of national action plans to end gender-based violence and halt the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls.

33. His country, which was a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, was committed to promoting the rights of disabled persons, including women, in national, regional and international development efforts. The Constitution recognized their right to respect and human dignity, and his Government would take appropriate steps to ensure that disabled persons achieved their full mental and physical potential.

34. **Mr. Mahtab** (India) said that empowerment of women was one of the most critical and beneficial aspects of social development and promoted the achievement of development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The recent economic crises had disproportionately affected the developing world and women in particular. As noted in the report

of the Secretary-General on improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/64/190), rural women had been the first to lose their jobs and social security while their caregiving role had increased. International cooperation was necessary to support countries' efforts to address that situation, in particular increased funding for bilateral and multilateral financial assistance programmes for developing countries.

35. Empowering women in all spheres of life had been a priority for India since independence. Programmes in that regard included the National Policy for Empowerment of Women and the 2007-2012 Five-Year Plan, and gender had been made a cross-cutting theme in all development initiatives. The Ministry of Women and Child Development was implementing programmes to encourage employment for women through, for example, microcredit schemes and such support systems as working women's hostels, short stay homes and childcare facilities. One particularly successful scheme was the Swayamsidha self-help scheme, which promoted economically sustainable self-help groups. More than 2.2 million such groups had been created.

36. Women had had full voting rights since independence; 33 per cent of seats in urban and local government were reserved for women, and his Government intended to propose increasing that figure to 50 per cent. A Joint Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women ensured that legislation was gender-sensitive, and most ministries and departments had implemented gender-sensitive budgeting to ensure that gender policies were not abandoned for lack of funds, which also facilitated monitoring of the implementation of those policies.

37. Measures had been adopted to combat violence against women, punish perpetrators, provide care for victims and strengthen the legal system with a view to preventing such crimes. The Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act and the recently launched National Campaign on Prevention of Violence against Women 2009-2015 were powerful tools in the fight against that scourge.

38. Women had been repressed and discriminated against for centuries, even though they performed some of the most socially valuable tasks in the home and the workplace. He reiterated Mahatma Gandhi's call for equal freedom and liberty for women. The international

community must work to take full advantage of women's tremendous energy and potential by giving them their rightful place in society.

39. **Mr. Andanje** (Kenya) stressed the pivotal role of women in social and economic development. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly constituted a comprehensive road map for the empowerment of women.

40. Despite the prolonged drought, the world economic downturn and the effects of the post-election violence in December 2007, measurable progress had been made in Kenya towards providing the legal foundations and institutional architecture necessary for achieving a gender-neutral society. A Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development and a National Commission of Gender and Development had been established, gender officers had been appointed in ministries and State corporations, and a National Policy on Gender and Development had been adopted. His Government's Vision 2030 strategic plan provided for accelerated political, economic and social development, the social aspect of which specifically identified gender concerns with a view to increasing participation by and opportunities for women in political life, business, education and health services.

41. At the political level, a 30 per cent affirmative action policy had been established for women in employment, promotion and training; the Political Parties Act required 30 per cent of office-holders in parties to be women and prohibited registration of any party promoting gender-based propaganda. The Women's Enterprise Fund had been established in 2007 to provide financial assistance to women for business and other economic activities; more than 116,000 women had received assistance from the Fund. Parliament was implementing legislative reforms to modify social and cultural attitudes that hindered women's full participation in society. The Law of Succession Act, for example, granted women the right to inherit property, including land.

42. His Government had reinforced legislation to protect women from gender-based violence. The Sexual Offences Act prohibited and penalized all forms of sexual violence, and the Family Protection Bill currently before Parliament would criminalize domestic violence, which most affected women. The Witness Protection Act would encourage women to

report violence or abuse without fear of reprisal, for example by establishing a witness protection programme. His Government was working with civil society stakeholders to change cultural attitudes that condoned the abuse of women's rights.

43. The Marriage Bill and the Matrimonial Property Bill were currently before Parliament and once adopted would further protect women's rights. The national plan of action for the abandonment of female genital mutilation 2008-2012 had been implemented at the national and community levels, and his Government was working with community elders to accelerate the abandonment of that regressive practice. The Second National Health Sector Plan 2005-2010 and Constituency Development Fund, by improving access to water and sanitation, had helped improve maternal and child health, in particular in the rural areas where most women lived. The national HIV/AIDS strategic plan was intended to improve the quality of life of those affected and mitigate the socio-economic effects of that pandemic. Since two thirds of those infected with HIV/AIDS were women, his Government was providing equitable access to antiretroviral treatment and expanding prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS.

44. He welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence and its provisions relating to a new gender architecture. Intergovernmental discussion on that proposal should be accelerated. Lastly, he acknowledged the invaluable work of UNIFEM, UNDP, UNFPA and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in assisting developing countries in promoting women's rights and supporting national efforts to enhance data collection systems.

45. **Ms. Simovich** (Israel) said that women continued to be denied their rights, forced into early marriage, stoned to death or whipped, killed in the name of family honour or at risk of death during pregnancy or childbirth. Gender inequality had proven difficult to eradicate, and she therefore welcomed the initiatives described in the report of the Secretary-General on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/64/151), for example his Unite to End Violence against Women campaign, and capacity-building for the effective implementation of national laws and policies.

46. She was heartened by the adoption of Security Council resolution 1888 (2009) on sexual violence against women and children in situations of armed conflict and looked forward to the early appointment of a Special Representative on that issue. The United Nations had an important role to play in promoting gender equality at the global, regional and country levels, and she strongly supported the creation of a composite gender entity within the Organization, as called for in General Assembly resolution 63/311.

47. Israel had always guaranteed complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants. As a result women held many high offices, for example in politics, or the judiciary, where 50 per cent of judges were women. They played a significant role in scientific research and technology development, and her delegation was especially proud of the recipient of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, Ms. Yonath, the first Israeli woman to be so honoured.

48. In 2007, a law had been enacted requiring all legislation to be gender-sensitive; in 2008, legislation had been passed providing financial incentives for employers to modify their workplaces and working conditions to meet the needs of women and parents. Recently, a new ordinance had come into effect requiring that all national statistics be gender-disaggregated. The Authority for the Advancement of Women had given special attention to Arab women in Israel, who made up 60 per cent of Arab students in higher education. Problems remained however: violence against women persisted and women remained a minority in the Knesset, the Government, the private sector and academia. Israel had been ranked only 56th on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index 2008.

49. In a world of strife, women often provided continuity and sanity. For example the Golda Meir Mount Carmel Training Center, established in 1961 by the Israeli National Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV), had been engaged in training activities with its Palestinian partners for more than a decade. To date, it had organized 18 seminars bringing together groups of 18 Israeli and Palestinian women for intensive dialogue and the forging of friendships. Those seminars might seem like small steps but every step, no matter how small, contributed to confidence-building. Her delegation would continue to work with other States to

further the advancement of women and stood ready to share its best practices.

50. **Mr. Vinluan** (Singapore) said that the Singaporean Constitution, which enshrined the principle of equal rights for men and women, served as the basis for regular reviews of national legislation to improve the position of women. The Penal Code had, for example, been amended in order to better protect women and children from domestic violence. His country's accession in 1995 to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women also demonstrated its support for the advancement of women.

51. Singapore's gender empowerment measure rank in the UNDP Human Development Reports had improved in 2007 compared with 2006, reflecting the progress made by women in such areas as education, political representation and economic participation. With regard to education, women's literacy rate had increased significantly between 2000 and 2008, and female students now accounted for more than half the full-time student intake at Singaporean universities.

52. Female representation in Parliament had also improved, while the percentage of managerial, technical and professional positions held by women had risen from 36 per cent in 1997 to 41 per cent in 2008. Under the Tripartite Workgroup on Enhancing Employment Choices for Women, established in 2007, a number of initiatives had been taken to empower women by creating viable work options that harmonized their family and work commitments. Lastly, the income gap between men and women had significantly narrowed over the past decade.

53. **Ms. Grabianowska** (Poland) said that, while her delegation supported the statement made by Sweden on behalf of the European Union, it wished to reiterate its understanding that any reference in that statement to the sexual and reproductive rights of women did not constitute an encouragement of the promotion of abortion.

54. **Mr. Beleffi** (San Marino) said that his delegation strongly supported the Secretary-General's Unite to End Violence against Women campaign and had participated actively in the debate held at the sixty-third session of the General Assembly on the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against

humanity, which included the responsibility to protect women and girls from mass rape and mutilation.

55. At the national level, San Marino had implemented the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence and had sponsored a television spot about violence against women. A professionally operated hotline provided women victims of violence with legal, medical and psychological support. Promoting the advancement of women and gender equality was not just a matter of principle but was also essential for economic growth, poverty reduction and development effectiveness.

56. **Ms. Hammad** (Yemen) said that her country had been among the first to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and had recently submitted its seventh periodic report. Numerous amendments had been made to national legislation in compliance with the country's international commitments. Most recently, the minimum age for marriage had been raised to 17. Government agencies were implementing a range of strategies to promote women's rights.

57. Yemen was working to ensure women's participation in decision making. Yemeni women had been remarkably successful in leadership roles: there were women ministers, ambassadors, judges and lawyers. The President's electoral programme had included integrating women in the political, economic and social life of the country. As a part of the ongoing political reform, a female quota of 15 per cent had been determined for Parliament. However, her delegation was concerned at the situation of women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The international community must take action to alleviate their suffering and end the occupation.

58. **Ms. Kavun** (Ukraine), emphasizing that gender equality, gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women were an essential part of the development agenda, said that her Government had adopted and implemented national action plans and legislation based on the major international instruments for the advancement of women and established ministerial bodies covering areas such as equal rights and opportunities, legal expertise on gender issues, the family, demographic development and the prevention of human trafficking. Those and other important steps would be reflected in Ukraine's forthcoming periodic

report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, whose improved reporting guidelines and working methods her delegation commended.

59. Violence against women, who represented 95 per cent of the victims of family violence, was considered the main obstacle to gender equality in her country. There were 150 governmental and non-governmental organizations operating in Ukraine to assist victims of violence, and the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports, the body specifically responsible for the prevention of domestic violence, had launched a campaign in Ukraine in connection with the Secretary-General's campaign *Unite to End Violence against Women*. The goals were to improve the legislative base for combating violence, encourage national recognition of the seriousness of the problem, raise public awareness of violence as a human rights violation and assist the victims while counselling perpetrators of family violence.

60. Among the worst forms of violence against women were sexual exploitation and trafficking. Since young women and girls from Ukraine were regrettably among the millions worldwide subjected to trafficking, the Government had adopted anti-trafficking legislation. Ukraine was deeply concerned over the growing international interconnection of the activities of various criminal organizations, and the close link between human trafficking and drugs, organized crime and terrorism. The multidimensional problem of human trafficking thus required a comprehensive, integrated approach.

61. Welcome steps had been taken by various United Nations bodies to address the issue of trafficking in women and girls, and the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking had also produced a number of useful results. The phenomenon was regional and global and could not be dealt with effectively at the national level. It was particularly critical for the countries involved in different stages of the trafficking cycle to cooperate closely. Ukraine was determined to do its utmost to create a world in which women were healthy, educated and free from violence and were given opportunities in all spheres of life.

62. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that his country had always been at the forefront of gender mainstreaming, and was a party to almost all of the relevant international instruments. A National Plan of

Action encompassing 15 Government departments had been established in 1998. Because poverty eradication and the empowerment of women were inextricably linked, the gender dimension was reflected in the country's development planning.

63. Bangladesh had already achieved gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment in accordance with Millennium Development Goal 3. The Government had waived tuition fees for women students. Microcredit programmes had vastly improved the situation of rural women, allowing them to become agents of change. In urban areas, poorer women were increasingly active in both the formal and informal sectors. Women could run for Parliament, where a quota of seats was earmarked for them. They were currently represented in all professions, including decision-making positions and several important ministries.

64. A gender perspective should be integrated into all aspects of the work of the United Nations. He welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence and looked forward to further action in that regard. Bangladesh had promised to provide a Female Formed Police Unit for deployment in peacekeeping missions. At the same time, the Peacebuilding Commission should fully implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

65. There remained a significant gap between global policy and national implementation. He, therefore, urged the developed States to fulfil their commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of gross national income to least developed countries by 2010 in accordance with the Brussels Declaration adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

66. **Ms. Sodov** (Mongolia) said that her Government had taken comprehensive action to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Several key policy documents had been approved over the previous decade, and substantial progress had been achieved in their implementation. A law on gender equality had recently been submitted to Parliament for consideration. A National Committee for Gender Equality had been established, and would be chaired by the Prime Minister.

67. However, more needed to be done in order to alleviate poverty, reduce the urban-rural divide, combat violence against women and girls, and increase

women's share in decision making. The efforts undertaken thus far included the provision of small low-interest loans and the improvement of health services and capacity-building. Poor women with many dependent children received particular attention. Mongolia would continue its engagement with the issue at international forums.

68. **Mr. Rasuli** (Afghanistan) said that, in the eight years since the signing of the Bonn Agreement, the people and Government of Afghanistan had made progress in education, health and institution-building. Since the collapse of the Taliban, women had returned to work for the Government and female education had resumed. Women participated to an unprecedented degree in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country.

69. The Constitution granted men and women equal rights, and provided that the State would formulate and implement programmes for female education. The National Development Strategy, launched in June 2008, included such benchmarks as the advancement of gender equality, the promotion of female participation in State and non-State activities, the provision of legal privileges for women, and the implementation of a national action plan for the advancement of women by 2010. A large number of women had competed in the most recent elections, and 38 per cent of the new voters had been women. Females accounted for 41 per cent of primary and secondary school pupils, 20 per cent of students enrolled in higher education institutions, and 75 per cent of those enrolled in literacy courses.

70. However, enemies of the people and Government continued to burn down schools, creating an atmosphere of fear and affecting school enrolment. The security situation hampered efforts for social development. The Government had criminalized violence against women and was carrying out a thorough review of cases in cooperation with the United Nations Development Fund for Women. With the help of the international community, the Government was comprehensively addressing each of the issues.

71. **Mr. Méndez** (Argentina) said that the elimination of gender-based violence was a particular priority for his Government. A law to punish and eradicate violence against women, which drew on the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, had been approved

by Parliament in March 2009. A campaign for gender equality and against violence had been launched in 2009 with the cooperation of Government agencies and international and non-governmental organizations. Irrespective of their legal status, migrant workers enjoyed full access to the facilities available for victims.

72. In view of its own situation, Argentina was particularly committed to improving the condition of rural women, notably through the Specialized Meeting on Family Agriculture convened by MERCOSUR. At that meeting, the thematic group on gender had worked to ensure that women enjoyed equal access to land and were informed of their rights. The Constitution of Argentina granted full equality to all citizens. The Migration Act extended that principle to male and female immigrants, who had full access to education, justice and other forms of social protection.

73. Argentina welcomed progress towards a new gender architecture better suited to realities on the ground. He hoped that discussions at the current session would lead to the establishment of a composite entity with universal scope and a mechanism for effective governance. That entity should encompass existing mechanisms neither through fragmentation, as had been the case with the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), nor through a return to geographic centralization. Instead, it should build on the capacities, knowledge and resources of each constituent part.

74. **Ms. Buhijji** (Bahrain) said that the commitment of the international community to the advancement of women showed that the issue was one of collective responsibility. The reform process in her country had stressed the need to integrate women in all areas of political, economic and social life. Women had gained full political rights, including the right to vote and run for office, and had exercised those rights in the elections of 2002 and 2006. Bahrain had been selected to host the first regional institute for the development and empowerment of women in economic terms. Bahraini women's associations were gaining increasing international recognition.

75. Her country's efforts to adopt and amend legislation reflected a sincere commitment to the advancement of women. The National Strategy for the Advancement of Women would help make women

aware of their political rights and encourage them to engage with the decision-making process. The Supreme Council for Women focused on three pillars: decision-making, family stability and economic empowerment.

76. A new Family Code had been enacted in May 2009, stressing the importance of protecting the family unit in accordance with the Islamic sharia. At a seminar on the Family Code, the Prime Minister had highlighted the need for a Family Code acceptable to all parties. The progress achieved by women in Bahrain had been praised by several international organizations. Such achievements did not stem only from the needs of modern societies or from international conventions; they reflected the essence of Arab and Islamic civilization.

77. **Ms. Shawish** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that national legislation, which was grounded in the teachings of the Koran, promoted the equal rights and responsibilities of men and women. The law granted women an equitable inheritance, prohibited them from changing their name after marriage, and entitled them to dispose of their own funds independently and exercise the same professions as men. Women occupied high-level positions in such areas as the judiciary, the army and the police force. Female enrolment in primary and secondary schools for the year 2006-2007 had exceeded that of males.

78. Her country was concerned at the physical and psychological suffering of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation. The report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict concerning human rights in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories (A/HRC/12/48) detailed some of the most recent of those human rights abuses.

79. Her country was also concerned at the situation of women in Africa, where development had been hindered by poverty, hunger, disease and armed conflict. In cooperation with Cuba and Nigeria, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had established a south-south health-care programme. In 2006, it had launched the Al-Qadhafi project for African youth, women and children, focusing on health, education and professional training. The African Union Decade for Women would also contribute to the advancement of women on the continent. Lastly, she called for international coordination to combat human trafficking

and welcomed the work of the United Nations Development Fund in promoting gender equality.

80. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said that his Government continued to empower the women of the nation, having successfully institutionalized gender equality at some levels. The new Constitution enacted in 2008 had removed the traditional gender bar against running for the office of President, and the Government policy of equal pay for equal work had eliminated wage gaps.

81. Yet it remained daunting to achieve *de jure* and *de facto* equality for women. Gender mainstreaming as part of development required considerable institutional reinforcement, and the country's extreme lack of capacity and resources had to be overcome. Also, although Maldivian women were among the most emancipated in the Islamic world because of their economic empowerment, the mixed effects of globalization on the country's fragile economy had widened gender disparities, especially in sectors not traditionally open to women because of cultural obstacles. Furthermore, economic and traditional social constraints kept women from participating in public life generally.

82. At the community level, action had been taken to promote equal treatment, protection against violence, economic security and a work/family balance. Nevertheless, the Maldives had begun experiencing the negative effects of extremism: the marriage of underage girls was an emerging issue and was impeding the Government's goals for the advancement of women. In compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Government was focusing on two very crucial goals: the repeal of discriminatory legislation, and a reform of the justice system to give women equal access. International technical cooperation was needed, however, to thus modernize the country's legal system.

83. The global financial crisis had set back small developing States such as the Maldives in unimaginable ways as they sought to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly Goal 3 with its impact on women. A concerted effort to reform the global economy was needed. The Maldives welcomed the decision by the General Assembly to set up a composite entity for the protection of the rights of women, which would institute a more focused, coordinated approach.

84. **Mr. Cuello Camilo** (Dominican Republic) said that his country was enacting strategic plans to combat HIV/AIDS, maternal mortality and teenage pregnancy. Over the previous 15 years, the Dominican Republic had built up a proud record of struggling for gender equality. Since 1983, it had hosted and supported the headquarters of INSTRAW, which played a fundamental role in promoting the advancement of women and deserved to be strengthened and consolidated. The Institute continued to make a vital contribution to the issue of gender in relation to migration and development, governance and political participation, and peace and security. It had always been intended that the headquarters of INSTRAW would be located in a developing country. Shifting its training and research functions to a developed country would be a distortion of that original mandate.

85. General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence had strongly supported the consolidation of the four institutional arrangements for the promotion of gender equality into a composite entity. It remained to determine the functions and mandate of that entity. His country was confident that the entity that emerged would be stronger and would preserve and strengthen the mandates of each of its four constituent parts. The specific and unique research and training role of INSTRAW should be maintained as a fundamental instrument for the advancement of women, in particular in the developing world. He trusted that that work would continue to be based in the Dominican Republic, thereby ensuring equitable geographic distribution and the efficient allocation of scarce resources.

86. **Mr. Olhaye** (Djibouti) said that, despite the progress of the previous half century, women continued to be disproportionately affected by hunger, poverty and disasters. They often suffered unspeakable sexual, physical, mental and emotional violence. He was disturbed at the increasing reports that a number of peacekeepers, who had been sent to restore law and order and eliminate crime, had been responsible for such criminal behaviour. There was an urgent need to adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards violence against women perpetrated by United Nations peacekeepers.

87. In order to eliminate gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict, deeply ingrained stereotypes must be changed. Investment in women and girls had a multiplier effect on production and was central to the achievement of the Millennium

Development Goals. Policies promoting decent work and full employment should include specific measures to empower women, removing structural barriers and promoting equal pay for work of equal value. He welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence, which supported the establishment of a composite entity to tackle gender issues, and of Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), which requested the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General in order to address sexual violence in armed conflict. The United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women was also in need of support.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

88. **Mr. Okuda** (Japan), said that the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had given the impression that Japan refused to acknowledge or apologize for its past. That was untrue. On 4 August 1993, the Chief Cabinet Secretary of Japan had extended sincere apologies and expressed remorse regarding the issue of "comfort women". In the Pyongyang Declaration signed by the Heads of Government of the two countries in 2002, Japan had acknowledged the tremendous damage and suffering caused by its colonial rule, and expressed deep remorse and a heartfelt apology.

89. Japan had conducted talks with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to settle the issue with a view to establishing diplomatic relations. At that very session of the General Assembly, the Prime Minister of Japan had expressed his intention to normalize relations through the comprehensive resolution of all outstanding issues between the two countries. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must take tangible steps to advance such talks.

90. **Mr. Pak Tok Hun** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that Japan had expressed different points of view on the question of "comfort women". On 4 March 2007, the Prime Minister of Japan at the time had recklessly remarked that there was no evidence for the recruitment of "comfort women". On 25 March 2007, the then Deputy Cabinet Minister had stated that there had been no "comfort women", but only prostitutes sold by their parents. On 23 July 2009, during the consideration of the sixth periodic report of Japan in the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/SR.890), the representative of that country had stated that the

issue of "comfort women" had been legally settled. Such an irresponsible remark rubbed salt into the wounds of the victims. Japan wished to deny its past and take its place in the military and political arena. Nobody could be certain that its shameful actions would not be repeated. For its own sake, Japan should face up to its past and make amends.

91. **Mr. Okuda** (Japan) said that, for the previous 60 years, his country had been working to promote peace, prosperity and human rights. The former Prime Minister had repeatedly confirmed that he endorsed the position expressed by the Chief Cabinet Secretary on 4 August 1993.

92. Although no country had an impeccable record, it was inappropriate for Japan to be criticized by a State that had no respect whatsoever for human rights. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea could not justify its continuing human rights violations by hiding behind the past. In particular, that country must immediately ensure the right to food, refrain from punishing citizens who returned to that country, and put an end to public executions.

93. **Mr. Pak Tok Hun** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that Japan had indeed apologized in words. He wondered, however, when Japan would make a political decision to make amends for its criminal past and become a member of the international community with clean hands and a clean conscience.

94. **Mr. Sammis** (United States of America), responding to a statement made that morning by the representative of Cuba, said that his delegation regretted the inaccurate and inappropriate use of the word "genocide", which diminished the suffering of genocide victims. United States sanctions did indeed restrict the trade of United States companies and individuals with Cuba. However, the United States was also the largest provider of food to Cuba: in 2008, its agricultural sales to Cuba had amounted to some \$717 million. The United States was Cuba's fifth-largest trading partner, and a significant exporter of medicine and medical equipment to that country. The people of the United States was the largest source of humanitarian aid to Cuba.

95. His country had taken several measures to enable Cuban citizens on the island to have access to much-needed resources. Steps had been taken to facilitate family travel, lift limits on family remittances, and

promote the free flow of information to and from Cuba. The United States had resumed bilateral discussions on migration, and had initiated talks to establish direct postal services. The United States did not discuss individual visa cases. However, over 120 visas had been issued to persons visiting the jailed Cuban intelligence operatives. All visa applications were processed strictly in accordance with the Immigration and Nationality Act.

96. Ms. Pérez Álvarez (Cuba), said that the representative of the United States had still not explained why the State Department had never granted Ms. Pérez O'Connor a visa. The United States administration continued to allege that she posed a security threat. At the same time, the international terrorist Luis Posada Carriles was allowed to freely walk the streets of Miami. Mr. Posada Carriles had openly confessed to planning the bombing of a Cubana Airlines flight, which had resulted in 73 deaths, and the bombing of a series of Cuban hotels in 1997. He had also plotted to assassinate the former President Fidel Castro during a visit to Panama.

97. The unilateral embargo against Cuba remained in effect and constituted an act of aggression and genocide under the Geneva Conventions. If the President of the United States was truly open to lifting the embargo, his administration could begin by ending such practices as restricting the purchase of United States products; freezing and confiscating transfers from third countries in United States dollars; denying access to the United States for third-country vessels that had transited in Cuba; and prosecuting financial entities that traded with Cuba.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.



General Assembly

Sixty-fourth session

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Third Committee

Summary record of the 12th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 14 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Penke (Latvia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 62: Advancement of women (continued)
(A/64/38)

(a) **Advancement of women (continued)** (A/64/79-E/2009/74, A/64/151, A/64/152, A/64/164, A/64/190 and A/64/342)

(b) **Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (continued)** (A/64/218)

1. **Mr. Jomaa** (Tunisia), referring to the Secretary-General's reports on the status of women, called on Member States to give full consideration to the recommendations included therein and welcomed the campaign to end violence against women. Violence against women was not a widespread phenomenon in Tunisia, which had implemented effective prevention measures. In November 2008, it had launched a national strategy for the prevention of violent behaviour within the family, with a view to mobilizing society as a whole. It had also adopted a set of measures to protect the fundamental rights of women, to integrate them into the development process and to enable them to participate fully in building the society envisaged in the declaration of 7 November 1987, while also preserving a social balance and enabling women to realize their full potential in the family and in public life.

2. Tunisian women were present in all sectors of activity, production and investment, and were increasingly involved in decision-making. They held leadership positions in both the executive and the legislative branches, in the courts and in advisory bodies, as well as in the civil service. Tunisia had two women ministers and 43 women members of Parliament.

3. Tunisia's example showed that political development and social equilibrium could go hand-in-hand. It attested to the importance of protecting women's rights and consolidating mechanisms for partnership and cooperation between States, which was essential for the achievement of sustainable, equitable, integrated and balanced development.

4. **Ms. Saidi** (Rwanda), noting that 2010 would mark the anniversaries of global commitments relating to the advancement of women, appealed to the

international community to build upon that momentum and welcomed the General Assembly's decision to create a new United Nations gender entity. Always a firm advocate of women's rights, Rwanda had adopted a policy of gender mainstreaming in its public and private sectors, and in its programmes and budgets. Gender equality was provided for in the Constitution, and Rwanda was the first country to have a majority female parliament. A gender observatory had been established, which was responsible for mainstreaming a gender perspective into Government policy planning. Rwanda had also passed laws that were integral to women's social and economic development and to their financial stability, including laws relating to inheritance and land ownership.

5. Conscious of the importance of education for development, Rwanda had made the education of girls a priority. However, while gender parity had been achieved in primary schools, many challenges remained in secondary education. Women were still often underrepresented in scientific and technological fields, and remained largely employed in the informal sector.

6. Increased political will and commitment at the highest level were essential in order to end gender-based violence. During the genocide of 1994, the most inhumane acts of violence had been perpetrated against women in Rwanda, including deliberate infection with HIV. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda had first identified the crime of rape as a form of genocide. It was important that victims should not become marginalized but should instead be reintegrated into society and given the socio-economic support that they required. Her Government firmly believed that women should play an integral role in promoting peace and security in conflict and post-conflict situations. It remained firmly committed to the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009).

7. The economic crisis had disproportionately affected women, as demonstrated by the increase in unemployment, poverty and violence. However, the crisis had in fact presented an opportunity for Governments to create jobs and to implement public policies that would help to improve the situation of women.

8. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) congratulated the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for the contributions made by their institutions and for their personal commitment to the advancement of women throughout the world. While women accounted for more than half the population of the world and played a key role in society, much remained to be done to meet the commitments undertaken by the international community, especially the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), many of which concerned women. The results had been mixed owing to the persistence of discrimination and inequalities based on biological, psychological, cultural and legal factors. Most of the poor people in the world were women and girls. That situation was a result of unequal access to production resources, gender biases with respect to property and inheritance, a lack of access to education, the limited participation of women in decision-making, stereotypes in the labour market, armed conflict, the inadequate coverage of health services, and, above all, HIV/AIDS.

9. States should join forces to promote the empowerment of women and to enable them to play an integral role in development. While that task was a formidable one, her Government believed that the international community should, first and foremost, focus its efforts on education and poverty eradication.

10. She welcomed the decision to establish a new entity with universal competence within the United Nations system that would be responsible for gender-related issues and the advancement of women worldwide. Her country, which gave high priority to the advancement of women, had drawn up national strategy guidelines designed, *inter alia*, to address gender-based inequalities so that women could realize their potential through their full participation in development and national life, and through the establishment of economic, social, political and cultural conditions conducive to the enjoyment of their fundamental and civil rights.

11. Cameroon had made significant progress towards implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and was continually adjusting the strategies laid down in its policy declaration and in the multisectoral action plan entitled "Women and development". Those

programmes served as a road map for Government action on education, health, the economy, the full use of female human resources, efforts to counter violence against women and decision-making. As part of its efforts to achieve the MDGs by 2015, Cameroon had recently completed its new growth and employment strategy document, which was aimed at improving the status of women. In specific terms, action would be taken to raise awareness about women's rights and the instruments related thereto, including in all relevant ministries and State-owned companies, with a view to promoting gender mainstreaming in development planning, budgeting and resource management.

12. Reaffirming Cameroon's commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and the MDGs, she stressed that the advancement of women called for international solidarity. Her delegation therefore appealed to development partners to uphold the commitments that they had freely undertaken at United Nations meetings and conferences on development.

13. **Mr. Ould Ghadi** (Mauritania) said that his country had adopted all of the conclusions and recommendations arising from the Fourth World Conference on Women and was upholding the international commitments for the promotion of women's rights under the international human rights instruments to which it had acceded, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified in 2001, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified in 1991. Mauritania had established a Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and Families, whose mandate included the advancement of women and their participation in development. The Ministry had implemented programmes to further strengthen the family, to improve the collection and analysis of data on the advancement of women and women's movements, and to increase awareness in society about the rights of women, children and families.

14. Mauritania had made considerable progress, especially in combating gender-based discrimination, through the adoption of a personal status code and affirmative action measures, for example, in Parliament. Women currently held senior positions, including in regional administration and in the

diplomatic service, and a woman had recently been appointed to head the country's diplomatic service.

15. Having recalled the measures taken by Mauritania in the areas of poverty eradication, education, health and violence against women, he said that his country was determined to improve the economic participation of women, especially by facilitating their access to productive resources and markets, combating unemployment and developing women's projects. To that end, Mauritania was making every effort to encourage a culture of saving and credit for women. In the field of education, the enrolment rate for girls in basic education had been above 98 per cent in 2008 as a result of the actions taken in that regard, such as the adoption of a law on mandatory school attendance. In the field of health, Mauritania had worked over the past four years to improve the coverage and quality of health services; hence, the rate of maternal mortality had dropped. In addition, State-led campaigns had helped to raise women's awareness of health issues, especially breastfeeding and HIV/AIDS prevention. Mauritania had put in place the institutional capacities to counter violence against women, including a national commission to combat harmful practices and a national commission on human rights. Policymakers had been given training on ways to ensure that victims receive assistance and women gained access to the media. Mauritanian radio stations had a large number of female personnel and many broadcasts were about the economic and social development of women.

16. Mauritania was providing increased resources for the advancement of women and planned to overcome the many remaining obstacles through cooperation with its development partners.

17. **Ms. Tacla** (Mozambique) said that, in keeping with the principles enshrined in its Constitution, Mozambique had created institutional mechanisms and policies for the advancement of women, such as the 2002-2006 National Plan for the Advancement of Women and also the gender policy, which made it possible to identify the measures to be taken to promote gender equality, respect for fundamental rights and women's participation in development. Mozambique had focused its efforts on the enrolment of girls and adult education, particularly in rural areas, and on the economic empowerment of women, by encouraging their participation in income generation activities. For example, the new land law explicitly

stipulated that women had the same rights to land ownership as men; the Labour Code now provided equal rights for men and women; the Family Code had been revised; and the Commercial Code allowed women to carry out commercial activities and to have access to credit.

18. Mozambique was a party to the main international and regional instruments relating to women and had adopted several laws to implement its international commitments, including the law on the promotion and protection of the rights of children; the law against trafficking in persons, particularly women and children; and the law on domestic violence against women. Recalling that her country supported the campaign launched by the Secretary-General, she explained that her Government had implemented a national plan to prevent and combat violence against women for the period 2008 to 2012, under which police stations provided services for women and children who were victims of violence. It was also important to raise awareness throughout society; indeed, the First Lady of Mozambique was involved in such actions, which included promoting maternal health and the economic empowerment of women and girls. Despite all those efforts, however, women were still victims of gender stereotypes that prevented them from gaining access to high-level posts. Their situation was exacerbated by the economic, financial, food and energy crises, and by climate change.

19. In conclusion, she stressed the importance of generosity from the international community to achieve the targets set for the advancement of women. In addition, her country supported the creation of a composite United Nations entity responsible for gender issues, which should facilitate progress in the advancement of women in all regions of the world.

20. **Ms. Tiendrébéogo** (Burkina Faso), welcoming the progress made at the intergovernmental level in promoting gender equality and access to decent work, combating violence, enhancing security and promoting the empowerment of women, said that her country had not remained at the margins of those developments. In 1997, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women had been created to ensure the full enjoyment by women of their rights and, since 1990, the Government had been seeking to combat the practice of female circumcision. To that end, it had created a national committee and had incorporated female genital mutilation in the Penal Code. To put an end to that practice, which had been

condemned at the highest level by the President himself, Mrs. Compaoré, his wife, had launched a joint initiative with Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Togo.

21. The national day dedicated to that effort had been held under the theme "Political will for zero tolerance of female circumcision". The elimination of that heinous and discriminatory practice was essential, *inter alia*, to improve maternal health and to promote gender equality. The recently adopted national plan of action advocated strengthening transboundary cooperation in that area.

22. Cooperation between States, national partners and civil society was essential for the success of such actions. In that regard, her Government wished to thank the Inter-Agency Network for Women and Gender Equality for its support in drawing up the national plan of action for 2009 to 2010.

23. **Ms. Haile** (Eritrea) said that preparations to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action would coincide with the thirtieth anniversary of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW). The Union, which had been established in 1979 with the full support of the Eritrean Government, worked for gender equality and the advancement of women by promoting better political, economic, social and cultural opportunities.

24. In order for gender equality to be achieved, it was not enough to outlaw discriminatory practices; the root causes of gender imbalances needed to be addressed. Accordingly, the Eritrean Government's poverty reduction strategy paper focused on the needs and interests of women, whether in the areas of education, primary health care, access to drinking water or rural microcredit. The Government's savings and microcredit programme, operating in all six regions, was the largest in the country and had made it possible to establish local banks whose clients were mostly women. The high rate of participation of women in literacy programmes was also very encouraging, and the strategy that had been adopted in those programmes had helped reduce gender disparities, although women continued to shoulder heavy responsibilities within the family.

25. In the area of health, information campaigns had been organized to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, and the Government was also paying close attention to reproductive health and

reproductive rights. Its efforts had helped to reduce the rate of maternal mortality and to improve access to health care, among other positive results.

26. Violence against women was played out in many different ways. The Eritrean Government attached special importance to combating female genital mutilation, a practice that was very widespread in the country, although now criminalized by law. However, the adoption of new legislation would not end violence against women; public awareness-raising campaigns and other relevant programmes were also needed.

27. Her delegation remained committed to the advancement of women. It welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative to create a new rational and effective framework for addressing women's issues and looked forward to participating actively in that effort.

28. **Ms. Muhimpundu** (Burundi) said that, in October 2003, the Government of Burundi had drawn up a national gender policy based on the themes of the programme adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women. It had also implemented significant macroeconomic and structural reforms on the basis of the Strategic Framework for Combating Poverty, a triennial development programme aimed at improving the status of all citizens without discrimination.

29. The implementation of that programme had enabled progress to be made towards achieving some of the MDGs focused on women's empowerment. In the political field, the new electoral code stipulated that at least 30 per cent of the persons elected by direct universal vote, including to Parliament, should be women. With regard to security, women were participating in the peaceful settlement of the disputes in which Burundi was involved. They held senior positions in the police force and the army, and they took part in international peacekeeping missions in Darfur and Somalia.

30. In the economic sector, entrepreneurship among women was on the rise. Conscious that the economic development of urban and rural women had an impact on the country's development as a whole, the Government had launched a rehabilitation project for women based on three pillars: support for women's income-generating associations, the empowerment of vulnerable women and actions to eliminate violence against women.

31. In the social sphere, the revised Penal Code enacted on 22 April 2009 included harsh penalties for sexual violence. Furthermore, as of January 2010, pregnant women would receive free medical care until childbirth. Free primary education for girls would also be expanded, especially in rural areas.

32. In conclusion, she said that implementation of the reforms had been greatly facilitated by the understanding of the people of Burundi and she reiterated her country's support for the creation of a composite entity for the advancement of women.

33. **Ms. Al Kendi** (United Arab Emirates), stressing that her country was continuing to work towards the implementation of the commitments undertaken at Beijing and at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, said that women's issues had become an integral part of national development policies. Gender equality was enshrined in the Constitution, which provided for the rights of women in such areas as employment, social security, education and property.

34. The United Arab Emirates had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2004 and had submitted its first report in 2008. She recalled that her Government had adopted several laws for the advancement of women, including legislation on maternity leave, and that it had created special mechanisms to enable women to play a greater role in public life and to contribute to national development.

35. Women were increasingly involved in the political sphere, including at the highest levels: two women had recently been appointed ambassadors; 9 of the 40 members of the National Federal Council were women; and the banking sector, which was one of the main economic sectors of the country, was recruiting an increasing number of women. Women from the United Arab Emirates were also working in a number of international organizations, and it could not be denied that others were actively involved in regional and international activities in various fields.

36. The United Arab Emirates had adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and had taken steps to implement it, inter alia, by establishing shelters and counselling centres for women victims of violence, as well as specialized courts. Women also had access to economic, social, legal, psychological and medical assistance, and

special measures had been adopted to protect divorced women and to improve the conditions under which they could see their children.

37. The United Arab Emirates commended the efforts undertaken by the United Nations system for the advancement of women and the elimination of violence and discrimination against them.

38. **Ms. Kidanu** (Ethiopia) said that, since women accounted for half of the world's population, and thus half of the human potential of society, her Government saw gender equality as a prerequisite for economic and social development. In Ethiopia, gender inequalities could be explained by past political, economic, social and cultural injustices against women. Determined to address that situation, the Government had revised its legislation to make legal instruments gender sensitive and had incorporated gender equality into the Family Code. Furthermore, the Penal Code had classified female genital mutilation, rape and trafficking in women as punishable offences.

39. To achieve the economic empowerment of women, the Government had focused its efforts on the agricultural sector, which was the engine of the national economy, by taking measures to facilitate women's access to land, credit and productive resources.

40. In the area of health, the national primary health-care plan implemented in 1993 was intended to provide decentralized services for all, focusing primarily on communicable diseases, nutrition, maternal and child health care and the environment. Since 1997, within the framework of development programmes, young women had been trained to raise awareness at the grass-roots level about the importance of health, HIV/AIDS prevention and family planning.

41. The measures taken in the area of education were aimed at increasing the school enrolment rate of women and girls, inter alia through the establishment of both a parent-teacher association to mobilize the local community and an educational management board which included female teachers. The Government was also working to increase the participation in educational programmes of girls and women from pastoral communities. Furthermore, higher educational institutions addressed women's issues within the context of various capacity-building programmes.

42. Laws and public policies alone would clearly not bring about gender equality without a corresponding change in attitudes. Violence against women was rooted in tradition: female genital mutilation, abduction, domestic violence and rape were common practices in Ethiopia. To eliminate such practices, awareness-raising programmes had been implemented at the local level and discussions had been held at all levels of the administration in cooperation with donors and non-governmental organizations, including through a tripartite project financed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

43. Advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns had been carried out across the country to increase the decision-making power of women, who, since the 2005 election, were better represented in Parliament, where they held 22 per cent of the seats. A civil service reform programme also encouraged women to participate in decision-making, while Government institutions were obliged to establish women's affairs departments at all levels.

44. In view of the progress achieved, the desire for change expressed by the Government and women of Ethiopia, and the laws and institutional mechanisms in place, her delegation believed that the MDGs for the advancement of women could be achieved earlier than anticipated.

45. **Mr. Bhattarai** (Nepal) said that the advent of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal had paved the way for new opportunities for the advancement of women. For example, almost one third of the members of the Constituent Assembly were women and the rights of women had been included in the interim Constitution, which protected the civil liberties and fundamental freedoms of citizens, including women.

46. Within the framework of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Nepal had amended its discriminatory laws, financed the training of single women for their social and economic empowerment, encouraged the participation of women in the formulation and implementation of local development programmes, and had adopted provisions for improved representation of women in public institutions, for their access to property and for respect of their rights as citizens. While women also had better access to basic education and to health services, disparities remained.

47. As a party to most international instruments relating to women's rights, Nepal had adopted legal and administrative measures to combat all forms of discrimination, including trafficking in women and children and domestic violence. For example, service centres had been established where victims of violence could receive treatment, legal aid and psychological counselling. Nepal also advocated concerted efforts at the national, regional and international levels to protect women migrant workers.

48. Nepal welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence of the United Nations, which provided for the establishment of a composite entity responsible for coordinating the activities of bodies for the advancement of women. Since funding was the most important factor for the advancement of women, his delegation called on the international community to increase its financial and technical assistance to developing countries, particularly to the least developed countries and to countries emerging from conflict, in order to complement their national efforts.

49. **Mr. El Mkhantar** (Morocco), recalling all the efforts already under way, said that his country welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/311 and Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) on sexual violence in armed conflict, which expressed the desire of the international community to work together for the advancement of women and the consolidation of peace and security in the world.

50. On the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Morocco had withdrawn its reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which it had ratified in June 1993, thereby demonstrating its steadfast commitment to adhere to the relevant international instruments.

51. Morocco viewed the role of women in society based not only on the values of Islam, which advocated gender equality, but also on the shared values and universal principles which were the common heritage of humanity. Its desire to promote the role of women in society could be illustrated by many examples: women were increasingly involved in the Kingdom's representative, executive and legal institutions, and the appointment of women to high-level posts reflected the commitment of Morocco to women's participation in public administration. The country had, *inter alia*, one

woman adviser to the King, five women ministers and 35 women members of Parliament.

52. Morocco had recently launched a multisectoral programme to combat gender-based violence through the empowerment of women and girls, which was part of the efforts to achieve the MDGs. It had also undertaken some legal amendments to promote and protect women's rights, including in the new Family Code, the Nationality Code, the electoral law and the Penal Code. Furthermore, the Ministry of Finance had published its third gender report to inform the debate on policy and its impacts.

53. Lastly, he stressed that any initiative aimed at the empowerment and advancement of women should be part of a democratic, comprehensive and holistic approach and that any efforts in support of democracy must be transformed into social, educational and economic policies that took gender aspects into account.

54. **Mr. Ramafole** (Lesotho), noting that his country was a party to several international human rights instruments that sought to address gender inequalities, recalled that Lesotho had also adopted a gender and development policy. The policy served as a framework to combat gender inequalities by providing women and men with equal opportunities to participate in political life, decision-making and the development process. It also sought to provide equal access to education and training, health services and control over resources such as land and credit.

55. The Parliament of Lesotho had adopted a law in 2003 which made sexual violence a punishable offence, with increased punishment for persons who deliberately exposed others to HIV, and which provided protection for victims. As a result, there had been a notable decrease in the number of cases of sexual violence. In 2006, Lesotho had enacted a law on the legal capacity of married persons, which gave women the same reproductive rights as men and protected women's property rights. In order to prepare for the entry into force of the law, the Government of Lesotho had held workshops to inform the public about its content, and the law enforcement agencies had also received the requisite training. The Government was also actively involved in the preparations for the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the documents which formed the basis of its initiatives for the advancement of women.

56. The largest obstacle to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women was the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Women were the hardest hit by the pandemic, since they were faced with the extra responsibility of providing care for patients and taking care of their families. The Government of Lesotho, in cooperation with its partners, would continue to intensify its efforts to eradicate HIV/AIDS and remained committed to the advancement of women and gender equality.

57. **Ms. Ivanović** (Serbia) said that, while the objective of gender equality remained remote, she welcomed the attention being paid to the issue of the advancement of women as the international community prepared to mark the anniversary of the adoption of three milestone documents. Her country aligned itself with the statement of the delegation of Sweden on behalf of the European Union with respect to the agenda item under consideration and wished to draw attention to the measures taken by Serbia at the national level.

58. The Constitution of Serbia provided equal opportunities for men and women, and special interim measures had been adopted for that purpose. Furthermore, several mechanisms had been established, such as the Gender Equality Council, which evaluated the situation with regard to the advancement of women and proposed relevant measures to the Government in order to strengthen the position of women in society, and the Directorate for Gender Equality, which was responsible for drafting laws and strategies, implementing international instruments, promoting equal opportunity policies for men and women and conducting awareness-raising campaigns, in close cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and other regional and international organizations. Parliament had its own Gender Equality Committee, which assessed public policy and reviewed the implementation of laws, and various mechanisms had also been established in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and at the local level. In addition, a national strategy to advance the status of women and to promote gender equality had been adopted in February 2009, a draft law was currently being reviewed by Parliament and training programmes had also been drawn up.

59. As a result of those measures, the number of women in decision-making bodies had significantly

increased. For example, the Speaker of Parliament, as well as the Ministers of Finance, Justice and Youth and Sports, were women. There were more women than men in the judiciary and the number of women in the police and the military had increased. Serbia was determined to continue to promote gender equality through the implementation of international standards in its domestic legislation, the enactment of new laws and the organization of awareness-raising campaigns.

60. **Ms. Polo** (Togo) said that, in the context of efforts to protect human rights, it was regrettable that women continued to face injustice and discrimination in the home, in the workplace and in daily life, even though they represented 50 per cent of the world's population and made a valuable contribution to the national socio-economic development process. Despite the progress made, few women participated in political life and the objective of gender equality was far from being achieved. However, men and women must learn to share responsibilities in order to counter persistent stereotypes in society, and mechanisms must be established to facilitate the integration of women into the economy and to help them balance work and family responsibilities. Her Government was therefore actively involved in promoting the adoption of various measures aimed at encouraging women to play a key role.

61. In order to implement the law banning female mutilation in Togo and to strengthen punishment for the violation of women's rights, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women was establishing centres where women could file complaints and alert the public authorities so that the perpetrators of such violence could be prosecuted. The Government was committed to providing training for the personnel of those centres and awareness-raising activities were also being organized by the Ministry with the assistance of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

62. Other steps had also been taken to strengthen the policy and institutional framework, to promote gender equality through the adoption of a national policy, to revise the Code of Persons and the Family and to establish ministerial coordination mechanisms. In addition, affirmative action measures had been adopted to help girls finance their studies and to strengthen women's economic capacities.

63. In the context of the current economic and financial crisis, it was important to continue to invest

in human resources and particularly in women, who played an active role in many sectors of the economy. In order to support the efforts already under way and to increase women's economic power, the Department for the Advancement of Women had drawn up strategies to promote female entrepreneurship and to strengthen women's capacities, including their financial capacities. In that regard, she commended development partners for their support to her Government, which had always made the advancement of women a top priority.

64. **Ms. Mongwa** (Botswana) reaffirmed her delegation's support for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Since Botswana had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, Parliament had been amending a range of laws in order to eradicate discriminatory provisions. Furthermore, to guide its efforts in that area, the Government had adopted a policy to encourage the involvement of women in development, a national gender equality programme and, within that framework, an advocacy and social mobilization strategy. Botswana also cooperated with several development partners, civil society groups, State-owned establishments and the private sector, particularly agencies dealing with maternal health and the contribution of women to development, which was of crucial importance for socio-economic development. Unfortunately, the current multiple crises were undermining the efforts to empower women and to achieve the MDGs. Concerted steps must therefore be taken.

65. Her delegation welcomed the achievements of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and commended the work being undertaken by UNIFEM, especially its efforts to eradicate poverty, combat violence against women and promote the participation of women in democratic governance. However, her delegation was concerned by the potential impact of the current crises on the health of women, particularly with respect to incidences of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. In view of the persistent discrimination and continuing violence facing women and girls, she also fully supported the campaign launched by the United Nations. Furthermore, Botswana welcomed the decision taken by the Organization to establish a new

gender entity, which would provide new directions for activities in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Her delegation stood ready to work with other Member States to finalize the remaining details in that regard. It remained determined to promote equality for all and would do its part to achieve the universal goals laid down by Member States of the United Nations.

66. **Ms. Gastaldo** (International Labour Organization (ILO)), recalling that the ninety-eighth session of the International Labour Conference had discussed gender equality and decent work and that ILO had launched a campaign in June 2008 entitled "Gender equality at the heart of decent work", underlined that those initiatives had resulted in the adoption of a resolution which, in accordance with the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, sought to integrate gender equality into the four strategic objectives of ILO. Having listed the main subjects dealt with by the resolution and the aspects highlighted therein, she said that follow-up actions were being implemented by several ILO units and those would be taken into account in the ILO programme and budget for 2010 to 2011, in particular in the context of the current economic crisis.

67. Projections for 2009 showed a deterioration in global labour markets for both women and men. Meanwhile, global trends published in March 2009 confirmed that women were generally at a disadvantage compared to men and that unemployment could be expected to rise in regions where women had already faced difficulties in finding employment before the crisis. Given the prospect of a prolonged global increase in unemployment, poverty and inequality, the International Labour Conference had adopted the Global Jobs Pact, which was designed to guide national and international policies aimed at stimulating economic recovery, generating jobs and providing protection to working people and their families. Its objective was to guarantee the effectiveness of the recovery measures. Furthermore, ILO was giving special attention to the impact of the crisis on migration and was currently developing a guide for policymakers and workers' and employers' organizations which focused on how to enhance the contribution of women migrant workers to development and on the nexus between migration, gender equality and development.

68. To assess the achievement of gender equality, ILO had also conducted a participatory gender audit

which had given added support to the United Nations country team performance indicators for gender equality. As a result of the audit, teams based in Africa and Asia had been able to mainstream a gender perspective into the "Delivering as one" programme.

69. The ILO International Training Centre was working in close cooperation with the ILO Bureau for Gender Equality on the implementation of training programmes to strengthen capacities for assessing the effectiveness of the gender mainstreaming strategy in support of gender equality and women's empowerment. The Centre also provided training courses on gender budgeting, female poverty and employment, women's employment rights and non-discrimination. It was currently conducting a campaign on behalf of the European Commission to combat gender stereotypes in small companies.

70. Lastly, she reaffirmed the commitment of ILO to the promotion of gender equality and decent work. ILO looked forward to participating actively in the discussion on that agenda item.

71. **Ms. Filip** (Inter-Parliamentary Union), recalling the milestone events of the Beijing Conference, the First World Conference on Women and the forthcoming 2010 conference, wondered whether it was possible to be satisfied with the pace of change over the past 35 years. While women now accounted for 18.6 per cent of members of parliament around the world, which represented significant progress, that figure was still far from the 30 per cent target set at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

72. In view of the forthcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Inter-Parliamentary Union had launched a review to assess the achievements made in terms of senior posts, particularly in parliaments. In that context, some 80 members and chairpersons of parliamentary committees from 35 countries had held a meeting in Geneva to attempt to determine whether parliament was a more open institution to women than other decision-making bodies. Considering that the question should first and foremost be addressed by focusing on figures and percentages, the participants believed that they could answer in the affirmative, since only nine parliaments were exclusively composed of men. Nevertheless, while parliaments were no longer an exclusively male domain, they were far from being gender balanced.

73. Women's political participation continued to be hindered by the difficulty of balancing professional demands and family responsibilities, funding, political party support, and cultural attitudes and stereotypes. However, it was encouraging to note that, over the past decade, the introduction of electoral gender quotas had enabled 22 of the 25 countries that had adopted such systems to increase the representation of women in parliament to at least 35 per cent. Public or private funding, or a combination of both, could promote women's participation, for example, by encouraging political parties to earmark specific amounts. Spending limits were another way to level the political playing field for everyone. The option of including a gender-sensitive finance component in laws and policies on political participation had also been mentioned.

74. Political parties also had a key role to play in that regard, particularly by respecting the principles of internal party democracy and, thereby, promoting the increased participation of women. Furthermore, the establishment of communication and leadership training programmes, and of mentoring between women, could help to cultivate the emergence of a new class of female leaders.

75. The meeting of members and heads of parliamentary commissions had also provided an occasion to determine whether women had real or symbolic opportunities to contribute to the work of parliament. The participants had noted that the entry of women into parliament, a typically male domain, could be a source of new challenges. Hence the need for a critical mass of women of at least 30 per cent so that there would be a sufficient number of women to take part in several committees, and so that they could begin to redefine political priorities and bring their own concerns to the fore. The participants had also noted that women must support each other, work together for change beyond party lines, and endeavour to cooperate and work with men to achieve the changes required. Lastly, the participants had seen the institution of parliament as a workplace with inherent biases that needed to be eradicated. Parliaments must also implement family-friendly and non-gender biased measures, since the level of gender sensitivity should be a measure of good institutional performance.

76. Those preliminary findings should provide some food for thought and would help to improve the preparations for the mid-term review of the Beijing Platform for Action, to be held in March 2010.

77. **Mr. Füllemann** (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) stressed that the international community, for several years, had increasingly recognized the needs of women, as demonstrated by the recent initiative of the General Assembly to consolidate different entities within the United Nations system in order to promote the rights and well-being of women worldwide.

78. ICRC had already recognized those needs in periods of armed conflict by adopting a corresponding plan of action at its twenty-seventh international conference in 1999. It further pledged to emphasize through its activities the special respect accorded to women and girls by international law, including by urging all parties to an armed conflict to respect the categorical prohibition of all forms of sexual violence. The multidimensional approach of ICRC, aimed at identifying and addressing the needs of women and girls affected by armed conflict and other situations, was based on the principle that conflicts had wide-ranging impacts on their lives. In addition to exposing them to the risk of bodily injury, war could also compromise their access to health care, force them to flee their homes, separate them from their family members and deprive them of drinking water, food or their main breadwinner. Given those realities, ICRC supported women in their various roles within communities, particularly by involving them in the search for solutions.

79. In view of the alarming number of women and girls subjected to sexual violence, particularly rape, ICRC had developed highly innovative programmes through the establishment of counselling centres, where victims of sexual violence and other traumas could meet with psychosocial counsellors to determine courses of action. If necessary, the counsellors could refer those women to medical or legal services and might also mediate between the victim and her family to reduce the risk of stigma or rejection.

80. ICRC responded to the needs of female-headed families, following the disappearance, detention or death of their husbands, by providing them with food, hygiene articles and essential household items. In cooperation with local non-governmental organizations, ICRC also supported income generation for women and helped them to recover their economic independence. Furthermore, it cooperated with governmental bodies so that eligible women had access to social welfare programmes.

81. ICRC also assisted civilians through a broad range of activities, including water projects, vaccination campaigns and market gardening. Furthermore, ICRC supported the training of traditional midwives, who were often the only source of reproductive health care for women and newborns, and encouraged women's participation in community meetings so that they could express their views and stay informed.

82. He took the opportunity to reaffirm the importance of incorporating the needs, ideas and capacities of women and girls in all decision-making processes. ICRC would continue to improve protection for women and girls during armed conflict. It recognized the need to create separate programmes to respond to their other needs, including social, psychosocial, medical or economic needs, and would also continue to provide them with assistance so that they could rebuild their lives in the aftermath of conflict.

83. He reiterated that it was essential to end sexual violence perpetrated in connection with armed conflict. ICRC stood ready to work with all States parties to the Geneva Conventions that were determined to combat such war crimes and to punish their perpetrators.

84. **Ms. Strauss** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) welcomed the opportunity to address the Committee in relation, inter alia, to the Secretary-General's report on violence against women migrant workers. Women now accounted for almost half of the total number of migrant workers in the world and an increasing number of them were searching for better opportunities elsewhere. Unfortunately, those opportunities were often marred by stereotypes, discrimination and harassment, as the Secretary-General had indicated in his report, which stressed that women migrant workers continued to be particularly vulnerable to violence, exploitation and discrimination. Such women were doubly vulnerable, owing to their status and their gender. They had to deal with difficult living and working conditions, increased health risks, a lack of access to social services and various forms of abuse. They also had no bargaining power and limited opportunities for establishing networks to receive essential information and social support. Furthermore, they often faced incarceration or deportation if they attempted to leave their employer.

85. That deplorable situation became worse during economic downturns. It was therefore crucial to guard

against policies aimed at sending migrant workers home, given not only the negative consequences of such measures for development but also the tensions that might be created between host and migrant communities in the battle for their economic survival. The mistaken perception of local workers that foreigners were taking their jobs helped to fuel marginalization and xenophobia, which had very negative impacts on both migrants and host societies. That was particularly true for women migrant workers, who were generally confined to low-skill or "typically female" work, particularly in the informal economy and in domestic, hotel and catering services, for example, which were regularly characterized by bad working conditions, low pay, high insecurity and a high risk of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse that the financial crisis was likely to exacerbate.

86. Through its gender mainstreaming policy, IOM intended to ensure that the needs of all migrant women were identified, taken into consideration and addressed by its projects and services. It also intended to address the issue of violence against women migrant workers in order to promote their physical, social and economic well-being. While her organization was convinced that migration could help to empower female migrant workers, it acknowledged that other crucial factors were the context in which migration occurred, the type of movement and the status of the women involved. Empowerment was more likely to occur when the woman who migrated was employed in the formal sector on the basis of a long-term contract. IOM therefore recommended that women migrant workers should have the same protection and safety at work, and the same means of redress, as the local workforce. Policymakers, practitioners and the public needed to be better informed about the vulnerability of women migrant workers, including their vulnerability to discrimination, exploitation and abuse.

87. It was crucial not to neglect such women, whether those left behind by a migrating husband, those migrating as qualified nurses, or those migrating irregularly into informal sectors where they played such an important role while remaining socially invisible. To ensure the protection of women, including women migrant workers, and to break the cycle of violence against them, an unfailing commitment was needed on the part of State and non-State actors as well as men and boys. A change of attitudes was also required within families, communities and societies. In other words, much remained to be done.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.



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Chairperson: Mr. Penke (Latvia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/64/315)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/64/172, A/64/182-E/2009/110 and A/64/254)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (A/64/285)

1. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), introducing her report to the Secretary-General (A/64/254), said that horrific violence, including sexual violence, against women, girls and even boys was a pervasive and global phenomenon, both a direct tactic of war and the result of a climate of impunity created by war. The practice of *bacha bazi* in many parts of Central and South Asia, whereby adolescent boys were taken by military leaders and warlords and made into male sexual slaves, should be confronted and stopped. Boys, as well as girls should be protected so that they were allowed the full benefits of a childhood without exploitation. International action was needed on arms transfers, cluster munitions and land mines in order to prevent the killing and maiming of children, which had been recognized as a trigger for international scrutiny. There was already a new focus on protecting civilians, in line with the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law, which was increasingly stipulated as a tactical priority for United Nations peacekeeping operations.

2. The listing of parties that recruited and used child soldiers had led to many groups entering into action plans and releasing children to the United Nations reintegration processes. However, many parties to conflict had not yet done so. Action should also be taken against recalcitrant perpetrators. Child soldiers should benefit from juvenile justice protections. They might be required to participate in truth and reconciliation procedures or other measures relevant to their societies, but they should also be rehabilitated and assisted to find a constructive role in society. In February 2010, on the eighth anniversary of the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, her Office would launch a worldwide campaign for its universal ratification. All

Member States that had not yet done so should ratify the Optional Protocol as soon as possible.

3. An annex to her report contained a list of rights and guarantees for internally displaced children. Education in particular should be an important part of emergency planning. Children should participate, as appropriate, in making peace agreements and rebuilding their societies. Their participation should be voluntary, free of any political pressure and in their best interest.

4. Her report outlined the many positive developments that had occurred in mainstreaming the issue of children and armed conflict throughout the United Nations system, including the formulation of a child protection policy by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. She acknowledged the contribution of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other United Nations organizations, the role played by civil society and the efforts of national Governments. The work of the Peacebuilding Commission with regard to meeting children's reintegration needs were beginning to bear fruit.

5. **Mr. Abdi** (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/64/285), said that the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child would be commemorated very soon. As the 2015 deadline for the Millennium Development Goals approached, efforts to meet the goals outlined in the "World fit for children" document would also support achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

6. Key health interventions had contributed to a further decline in the under-five mortality rate. In education, strategic partnerships and global networks were assisting aid and sector coordination. There was support for capacity-building in education quality, policy and reform, as well as education in emergencies, post-conflict situations and transition. Gender was also being addressed as an entry point for tackling other educational disparities. The "Progress for Children" report on child protection, launched the previous week, contained global data on, inter alia, protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse. He encouraged

the Committee to support the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, which would be considered later in the session.

7. It was critical to address the social acceptance of violence against women, and UNICEF had supported the preparation of the Secretary-General's report on the girl child (A/64/315), with its thematic emphasis on female genital cutting. The "World fit for children" document also aimed to provide protection for children with disabilities. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was now second only to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in terms of speed of ratification.

8. Progress in the area of children's participation in the taking of decisions that affected them had included an integral role for children and adolescents at several global advocacy events in the past year. In the previous month, a diverse delegation of children had participated in the Summit on Climate Change. A youth forum was being organized in connection with the December Copenhagen Climate Change Conference.

9. The economic slowdown had made it more difficult for Member States to keep focus on the goals set out in the "World fit for children" document. Undernourishment and acute malnutrition were on the rise, which would have a long-term impact on children. Despite declining levels of child labour from 2000 to 2004, an estimated 200 million children around the world were engaged in hazardous or physically strenuous work. UNICEF continued to promote access to quality education as the best response to that problem. Laws, policies, budgets, research and systems of governance should reflect the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Capacities should be developed to realize children's rights, and collaboration to meet the promise of the Convention for all children should be strengthened.

10. **Ms. Santos Pais** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children), said that the United Nations study on violence against children had led to a worldwide movement to protect children from violence and that her work would build upon the foundation of that study and its recommendations. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (Convention No. 182) provided

a normative foundation for her work and facilitated the mainstreaming of the protection of children from violence as a core component of the national policy agenda.

11. Violence against children remained widespread, largely hidden and too often condoned by society, despite its serious impacts on children's lives. According to a recent UNICEF publication, over 85 per cent of children aged between 2 and 14 years had experienced physical punishment and/or psychological aggression. Partnering with children was a critical dimension of her agenda, as they could contribute to understanding how to prevent violence and develop child-sensitive counselling, recovery and reintegration strategies.

12. The Special Representative's mandate would be reviewed after three years. The recent establishment of the Trust Fund for contributions to support the mandate and the mechanisms already in place for institutional collaboration provided a firm basis for the work ahead. The 12 recommendations of the study provided a reference, with time-bound targets in critical areas. In the immediate future, she would focus on the development in each State of a national comprehensive strategy to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, the introduction of a legal ban on all forms of violence against children and the promotion of a national data collection system and research agenda.

13. Twenty-four States already had a comprehensive and explicit legal ban on violence against children, and several had strengthened their legislation to address specific forms of violence. Legal prohibition was a critical safeguard for victims and witnesses and provided a strong reference for capacity-building initiatives and public information campaigns. Strong political will was essential to move the process forward despite the financial and economic crisis. Investing in children and preventing violence would limit the impact of the crisis and reduce the social cost in the long run.

14. **Mr. Mokhiber** (Officer in Charge, New York Office of the High Commission for Human Rights) said that the report of the Secretary-General on the girl child (A/64/315) provided an overview of the existing international and regional legal framework on the rights of the girl child and key obligations and commitments of States. It addressed progress and obstacles in combating discrimination against the girl

child in the areas referred to in General Assembly resolution 62/140. The report was based on information from Member States and the outcome of the expert meeting on human rights and the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting in countries of prevalence and among immigrant communities, held in July 2009. The meeting was organized by the United Nations Children's Fund, in coordination with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

15. Lastly, the report of the Secretary-General on the Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/64/172) outlined international efforts and national progress in tackling child labour and meeting the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016. It highlighted the important role of education in that regard.

16. **Ms. Sapag** (Chile) said that the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children should be provided with the necessary human and financial resources. It would be interesting to hear where the Office would be based and whether the Special Representative had already initiated contacts with regional groups. Welcoming the focus on education in the report of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (A/64/254), the Chilean delegation would like to hear about successful initiatives for providing education in conflict situations. With regard to the report on the girl child (A/64/315), she asked for further information about recent initiatives against female genital mutilation.

17. **Mr. Bennwik** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union, asked the two Special Representatives whether there were any synergies with other United Nations mechanisms or treaty bodies in the efforts to promote comprehensive national child protection strategies. He also asked the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict for further details on how the child protection policy recently adopted by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations would apply to political and peacebuilding missions. His delegation was also interested to hear about how to improve data collection and reporting on sexual violence as a follow-up to Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) and on the expansion of the trigger mechanism in cases of sexual violence against children.

18. The Special Representative on Violence against Children should indicate which sources and forms of

violence would be prioritized in her work over the next three years. Lastly, he also asked about measures to improve data collection and research on violence against children and how children could play a role in research efforts.

19. **Mr. Hjelde** (Norway) said that Norway had made a contribution to the Trust Fund that supported the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children. He asked how other Member States could contribute to the Fund, as wide support would increase the sense of ownership. The Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict should speak about the challenges that she faced in mainstreaming her agenda in political and peacekeeping missions.

20. **Mr. Pournajaf** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that Member States usually concentrated on the effects of violence against children, such as female genital mutilation or early marriage, rather than the causes of violence, which included weak ethical values. United Nations reports and studies should consider moral issues in relation to controlling violence against children. His delegation would appreciate more information regarding the children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict had made no specific reference to them in her statement.

21. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) asked the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to state her position on the recently released report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/12/48). According to that report, serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, had been committed by the Israeli occupying forces in Gaza, in a deliberately disproportionate and systematic attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorize the civilian population. The tragic consequences of the savage and insane 23-day Israeli military aggression launched against the people in Gaza had included the unlawful killing of over 400 children and the maiming of others, the destruction of schools and homes, mass displacement, the obstruction of water and sanitation infrastructure, the use of children as human shields and the arbitrary detention of children.

22. She asked how the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict would follow up on the

allegations and recommendations contained in the report and what steps the Special Representative had taken to ensure protection for Palestinian children so that the Israeli occupying Power could never again commit such grave violations of international humanitarian law and war crimes against Palestinian children and to see to it that the perpetrators were held accountable and brought to justice.

23. **Ms. Gendi** (Egypt) said that the review of the mandate of the Special Representative on Violence against Children had originally been scheduled for 2010. She asked how the Special Representative perceived the beginning of her mandate, what her intentions had been for the initial period, and what her views were on the visibility needed for fund-raising for the Trust Fund. The Egyptian delegation looked forward to hearing the response of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to the questions posed by the observer for Palestine. Her report contained only superficial coverage of the situation of children in Gaza, although the Office of the Special Representative was usually more thorough in its reporting. Her delegation looked forward to hearing why certain aspects had been overshadowed or disregarded.

24. **Ms. Pi** (Uruguay) said that Security Council resolution 1832 (2008) reflected the progressive inclusion of all categories of violence within the monitoring mechanism. As Uruguay was participating in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), one successful example of efforts in that area, she asked the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict how troop-contributing countries could help to enhance the effectiveness of mandates in the field. Her delegation also requested clarification of how children's effective participation in peace processes could be ensured without also exposing them to damaging situations or experiences.

25. It was hoped that the unjustified delay in appointing the Special Representative on Violence against Children did not imply any loss of momentum. Her delegation trusted that, within three years, the Special Representative's mandate would be funded by resources from the Organization's regular budget. The preparation of the study on violence against children had been an excellent example of how children themselves could contribute to work on human rights. Lastly, the Special Representative should indicate how

she expected to work with children to implement the report's recommendations.

26. **Ms. Ellis** (Australia) said that her country was committed to preventing human rights abuses against children, having ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. All States which had not yet done so should ratify the Convention and its Optional Protocols. The Council of Australian Governments had recently endorsed the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 to ensure the safety and well-being of Australian children. It would be interesting to know what communities could do to complement the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

27. **Ms. Phipps** (United States of America) asked whether the Special Representative on Violence against Children was planning to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children. She also enquired whether the Special Representative's mandate would cover an issue where violence and health intersected: maternal mortality and early marriage, as girls who had children before the age of 18 years had a higher rate of dying in childbirth. If that was not part of the mandate, perhaps UNICEF planned to address that issue.

28. There were cross references between Security Council resolutions 1882 (2009) and 1888 (2009). Her delegation asked how the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict planned to investigate under the new trigger mechanism provided by Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) and whether that information would be shared in the context of work carried out under the other resolution in order to avoid duplication of effort.

29. **Ms. Ahuja** (India) asked how a demarcation would be maintained in the work of the new Special Representative on Violence against Children to avoid any overlap with the work of the other Special Representative or of other United Nations agencies. It would be interesting to hear how the dependence on voluntary contributions would affect the independence of the new Special Representative's agenda and priorities. Her delegation requested information on the projects to be undertaken over the next three years and also wished to know how UNICEF would move forward with its activities in face of the anticipated reduction of resources.

30. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that she would like to know more about the views of the Special Representative on Violence against Children with regard to other forms of violence not covered by the mandate of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, such as those faced by children living under occupation. Her delegation was pleased to have participated with other delegations in defining the new mandate on violence against children and in ensuring that it addressed the concerns of children living under occupation.

31. Turning to the report of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (A/64/254), she wondered why the Special Representative had failed to discuss the situation of children living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, even as the report mentioned her visit to the Territories. Furthermore, similar omissions had been made in the report on the follow-up to the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children and in the "World fit for children" document. She would appreciate a clear explanation of the reasons for such neglect.

32. **Mr. Bouabre** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that it was illusory to wish to resolve children's issues if the United Nations could not find a way to be effective against the insurgencies that were taking place in many countries, which inevitably drew children into conflict situations. In some cases, the children themselves wanted to be involved in the defence effort. He asked the speakers whether their mandates included putting pressure on the international community to not legitimize insurgencies which used children in conflicts.

33. **Ms. Simovich** (Israel) asked what could be done about the death penalty for minors, which was one of the most extreme forms of violence against children. She also wondered what could be done to protect child victims of terrorism and to prevent recruitment of children by terrorist organizations. It would also be interesting to hear about prevention of incitement to violence in schools and textbooks and in the media.

34. **Mr. Rastam** (Malaysia) said that the international debate generally focused on protecting children from violence, abuse and exploitation, but there was very little discussion of the socio-economic aspects of children's rights, although many issues affecting them were related to underdevelopment and poverty. He

asked for information on the steps being taken to protect children from the effects of the current economic crisis. It would be interesting to hear how the role of the family could be strengthened in terms of providing a caring environment and ensuring socio-economic stability so that children could fulfil their potential. At the same time, in view of the economic crisis, many children in the developing world worked to contribute to the family income. He wondered how a balance could be achieved between countering exploitation and assisting families to provide an environment safe from abuse, exploitation and violence.

35. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) asked the Special Representative on Children and Violence what could be done to combat poverty, which was one of the worst forms of violence against children.

36. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict), responding to the question on successful initiatives with regard to education in conflict zones, said that UNICEF and other humanitarian actors had negotiated with parties to conflicts to designate schools as zones of peace where children could study without fear of attack. In order to coordinate and mutually strengthen their respective child protection efforts, while also avoiding duplication of effort, she would be meeting every two months with the Special Representative on Violence against Children and UNICEF. She would also continue to work with other agencies that had begun to play an active role in child protection, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

37. Her office welcomed the child protection policy directive adopted by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and hoped that it would be implemented in political missions as well. Turning to the questions on collection of data on sexual violence in relation to Security Council resolutions 1882 (2009) and 1888 (2009), her Office had called a meeting of all United Nations agencies working on women's and girls' issues, and all had agreed to support the trigger mechanism and to work together on data collection. The Special Representative was working to ensure that all women's agencies worked with task forces responsible for data collection at the national level.

Given the difficulty of collecting information on sexual violence in many societies, it would be necessary to work closely with civil society actors that dealt with victims.

38. With regard to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, she had submitted to the Human Rights Council a report on the grave violations committed against children in Gaza and in southern Israel, based on the findings of the relevant task forces. Given the exhaustive nature of the report, which was available for distribution, the situation had not been given as much coverage in the reports of the General Assembly or the Human Rights Council. Her Office had given evidence for the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/12/48), and the parts of that report that related to children were in complete conformity with the Office's findings. Furthermore, her Office fully supported any accountability process proposed in the follow-up to the report and would continue to monitor the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

39. A strategic framework for the next three years of the mandate on children and armed conflict had been formulated earlier that year. The framework set out her Office's vision and priorities, including ending impunity for grave violations against children, mainstreaming the problem of children and armed conflict through the United Nations system and acting as the convenor on the issue, in addition to advocacy on special issues, such as reintegration of internally displaced children. As a troop-contributing country, Burundi had begun providing predeployment training on child protection. Her Office had submitted to the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations a proposal that all troop-contributing countries should provide such training, and would be grateful for Member States' support in that regard. The Special Representative fully endorsed general comment No. 12 on the right of the child to be heard, adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and would continue to implement it, *inter alia*, by meeting with members of children's parliaments and inviting children to participate in meetings on reintegration.

40. Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) required that her Office meet with non-State actors involved in a conflict in order to negotiate an action plan for the release and delisting of children involved with them. Therefore, access to non-State actors was crucial. Although Member States were often reluctant to grant

such access for fear of legitimizing the factions in question, she urged Member States to allow her Office to carry out its work in that regard, which was in no way an attempt to confer legitimacy upon non-State actors.

41. Her Office intended to address the use of children in terrorist activities in the context of work that tackled the broader issue of the changing nature of warfare. While the use of children as suicide bombers was certainly alarming, detention of large numbers of children in counter-terrorism operations and the killing of children explained away as "collateral damage" constituted equally troubling violations of children's rights. The Geneva Conventions and all the protections under international humanitarian law must continue to apply in new types of conflicts. Lastly, there was a need to put preventive systems in place at the local level in order to protect children from all forms of exploitation, whether they arose from socio-economic problems, as in the case of exploitative child labour, from conflict situations, as in the case of recruitment of children as soldiers, or from trafficking in children.

42. **Ms. Santos Pais** (Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children) said that it was heartening that delegations appreciated the need for urgent collaboration in order to implement the mandate on violence against children. Her Office looked forward to a fruitful and constructive dialogue with them, through which the most promising violence-prevention and child-protection initiatives would be identified. Furthermore, it would be essential to collaborate with existing mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels. She thanked delegations for noting the crucial role of funding in moving the mandate forward.

43. In the short time since her appointment, she had been working closely with regional partners and organizations. In Latin America, she had attended the Pan American Child Congress, held in Peru that September. Dialogue with Government ministers at the Congress had attested to the commitment to child protection in the region. Other positive developments included the appointment of Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro as Rapporteur on the Rights of the Child for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and the recent report issued by the Commission, which called for the protection of children from all forms of violence, including corporal punishment.

44. In the European region, the Council of Europe, currently the regional interface with the Special Representative, had established a platform on children's rights, by means of which information could be shared regularly with the Special Representative and among focal points from European countries. With regard to the Middle East, she had recently met with UNICEF and would also be attending a meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on the rights of the child and protection of children from violence. Her Office looked forward to seeing how countries in the region would pursue important regional discussions and initiatives on specific issues, such as female genital mutilation. She thanked the representative of Egypt for her contribution and for her country's leadership in efforts to combat female genital mutilation.

45. Prior to appointing the Special Representative on Violence against Children, the Secretary-General had decided that the Office would be based in the Secretariat building in New York. She was currently exploring office space options and reiterated that funding would be critical for setting up the Office. With regard to synergies with other mechanisms, she would continue to work closely with the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict around areas of shared concern. The anniversary of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2010 would present an important opportunity to advance the number of ratifications and promote the effective implementation of the Convention.

46. After participating in the annual meeting of special procedures of the Human Rights Council the previous year, she had come away with the understanding that there was no point in competing because mandate holders did not have enough resources to carry out their work and that working together on the many areas of common concern would yield the best results. In that connection, given that the children most affected by violence were those who lived in poverty and lacked access to basic social services, the mandate holders who addressed those issues were making an important contribution to the mandate on violence against children.

47. With regard to the priorities of her mandate in the next three years, the agenda, which was set forth in the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children (A/61/299), was clear,

particularly as concerned the three recommendations for which time-bound targets had been set, namely, the establishment of a national strategy, judicial reform and creation of a data collection system. She would make all the recommendations, particularly the time-bound ones, a priority on her core agenda. Her Office welcomed the steps taken by Australia towards developing a national child protection strategy. In order to protect children from all forms of violence, it would be necessary to engage with communities, with a view to gradually changing the mindset in society. In so doing, strategies must be evaluated periodically to ensure that such engagement was effective.

48. Since the completion of the study, a significant number of countries had either adopted comprehensive legal bans on all forms of violence against children or were working to introduce similar measures. Moving forward, it would be important to learn from positive initiatives undertaken by member countries. It would be necessary to invest in data collection, analysis and dissemination, as children who were not counted and identified could not be given the assistance they needed. While duplication of effort should be avoided, work done on data collection by other United Nations agencies might prove useful. Moreover, systems for data collection, analysis and dissemination had been established around the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

49. As there was a clear connection between, for instance, the level of education of mothers and the incidence of female genital mutilation, MDG-related data collected through existing systems might be used under the Special Representative's mandate and supplemented with information obtained through household surveys conducted to assess how communities perceived violence and potential solutions. In that regard, the example of Swaziland's recent household surveys of girls and women between 13 and 24 years of age was instructive. The Government of Swaziland was using the results of those surveys to address all forms of violence and to promote social mobilization on the issue.

50. With regard to the involvement of children in combating violence, general comment No. 12 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the right of the child to be heard was a key reference, and other United Nations agencies' surveys and polls had allowed children to express their views on violence and propose solutions. In addition, child participation had

contributed a great deal to the study on violence against children, as well as to policy development. For instance, an initiative on child trafficking in West Africa, in which children had been given a camera to photograph places where they were in danger of being trafficked, had prompted local authorities to take action.

51. At the request of the Secretary-General, UNICEF had been asked to serve as custodian of a trust fund for voluntary contributions to support the mandate of the Special Representative, and an agreement would be signed with all countries supporting the fund. Cross-regional financial support of the mandate would be essential, both in making it possible to carry out the agenda and in guaranteeing its independence.

52. The question of values in society must be addressed, as changes in attitude took time. Communities must be engaged in the process so that policy decisions were not perceived as judgmental or accusatory. The aim was to support parents, teachers, and other professionals in handling their responsibilities in a manner that did not call for violent means. Although more research was needed in that area, experiences to date had demonstrated that direct engagement with communities where traditional practices prevailed had helped bring about profound and genuine changes from within.

53. Pursuit of the ratification and implementation of the Convention and its two Optional Protocols, which set forth a clear agenda, was critical. In that regard, she noted with satisfaction that the Committee on the Rights of the Child had included a section on violence against children in its concluding observations on countries under review, thereby making the issue a domestic priority. Commercial sexual exploitation of children as cybercrime did indeed fall under her Office's mandate. It was a broad mandate, but Member States' collaboration would help make it meaningful. More research would be required on new technologies and their role in cybercrime.

54. The comment made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic had highlighted the fact that her Office's mandate called for no child to be left out or forgotten and for protection to be provided to all children. She would need to collaborate closely with the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in order to uphold that commitment. A key recommendation of the study on violence against

children had touched upon the death penalty within the context of juvenile justice, as did the Convention and other important international standards. While the death penalty was used by a small number of countries, it was still possible to make an important difference in that area.

55. **Ms. Gibbons** (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that, as a concrete step in accordance with the 2008 inter-agency statement on eliminating female genital mutilation and cutting, UNICEF had launched a joint programme for accelerating the abandonment of the practice. Currently operational in 12 countries, the programme could be launched in 17 others and reduce the incidence of female genital mutilation by 40 per cent, funds permitting.

56. In 2008, UNICEF had also adopted a child protection strategy that addressed the division of labour and responsibilities between the agency and the two Special Representatives. In order to promote implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, States parties should publicize its provisions as well as those of relevant national laws, with a view to changing attitudes and values and creating an ethic that placed children first. The economic downturn was having an impact on children, as demonstrated by rising malnutrition rates. The Fund was monitoring changes in malnutrition, school attendance and mortality rates, in addition to advocating for child-sensitive social protection so that development and child protection programmes were not the first to be cut.

57. She hoped that Governments would boost social protection programmes to ensure that children were protected from the downturn. Together with other United Nations agencies, UNICEF had provided special assistance to some 30 countries, in which the food crisis had increased the risk of malnutrition. Lastly, she thanked delegations for expressing support for child participation in the development of laws and policies, as well as in social discussions, as meaningful involvement of children and youth in decisions that affected them was an important step towards the realization of child rights.

58. **Ms. Lee** (Chairperson, Committee on the Rights of the Child) said that the welcome approval of additional resources by the General Assembly would allow the Committee to address the backlog of reports pending review — a largely transitory challenge owing

to the submission of reports under the two Optional Protocols to the Convention — by enabling it to meet in parallel chambers at its three sessions in 2010. Noting with appreciation the wide ratification of the Optional Protocols, she pointed out that they only required reports to be submitted separately once. Subsequent reporting obligations under the Protocols were included in periodic reports under the Convention. However, the Committee was reflecting on ways of managing the steadily rising number of State party reports and invited suggestions in that regard.

59. Currently only five initial reports from States parties remained outstanding. Expressing the hope that the Convention would soon achieve universal adherence, she respectfully encouraged Somalia and the United States of America, the only two States who had not yet ratified the Convention, to do so. The Committee had just celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention together with States parties at a two-day event in Geneva earlier that month. With another month to go before the official twentieth anniversary date in November 2009, she underlined that universal adherence to the Convention would constitute the ideal commitment of all countries to the protection of children's rights worldwide.

60. Another positive development was the adoption by the Human Rights Council of resolution 11/1, which established an Open-ended Working Group to explore the possibility of elaborating an optional protocol to the Convention to provide a communications procedure complementary to the reporting procedure under the Convention. That would significantly contribute to the overall protection of children's rights. Preliminary meetings of States parties supportive of the initiative had already taken place. The working group would convene between 14 and 18 December 2009 in Geneva. The Committee had already actively participated in a number of discussions on the advantages and practical implications of a communications procedure.

61. Human Rights Council resolution 11/7 on Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children had also been adopted at the June session. The resolution submitted the Guidelines to the General Assembly for consideration, with a view to their adoption on the twentieth anniversary of the Convention. She was confident that the Guidelines, once adopted, would provide a valuable tool for States parties and all

stakeholders involved in developing policies and practices for alternative care of children.

62. With regard to the general comments adopted by the Committee over the previous year, on the rights of indigenous children and on the right of the child to be heard, she thanked partners for their support during the elaboration process and called for wide dissemination of both general comments. It was hoped that the inter-committee working group established with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women would provide an opportunity for further cooperation in areas of common interest. Furthermore, the Committee on the Rights of the Child had continued to meet with regional directors of UNICEF in order to enhance cooperation and implementation of the Convention and its Protocols.

63. Other partners of great importance to the Committee included the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the newly appointed Special Representative on Violence against Children. Independent national human rights institutions were playing a key role in the reporting process, the follow-up process of implementing the Convention and the Committee's recommendations at the national level. The Geneva-based NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child also provided essential support by ensuring that the Committee maintained a close link with national civil society actors. Lastly, expressing concern that children might be the first affected by the economic downturn and increased expenditures owing to the influenza epidemic, she pointed out that the Committee would continue to give due attention to resource allocations for children in its dialogues with States parties.

64. **Mr. Bennwik** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that, in the 20 years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, substantial progress had been made towards its implementation. Many countries had made legislative reforms to ensure compliance with the Convention, and the establishment of national ombudsmen had contributed to the advancement of children's rights in many parts of the world. However, despite major achievements, obstacles

persisted and new challenges continued to emerge, child poverty and lack of access to education remained prevalent, hundreds of thousands of child soldiers were exploited in armed conflicts, and children with disabilities still faced many challenges. The European Union was dedicated to continuing to promote the participation and individual development of children with disabilities.

65. The European Union saw the twentieth anniversary of the Convention as a catalyst for its implementation at all levels. In that connection, it strongly supported the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in helping countries fulfil their obligations and expressed appreciation for the Committee's recent general comments on indigenous children and the right of the child to be heard. The European Union reiterated its call to States parties to withdraw any reservations contrary to the purpose of the Convention.

66. The right of children to express their views freely and to be heard in matters affecting them, a core principle of the Convention, was the theme of the resolution introduced that year by the European Union and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean countries. States parties must redouble their efforts to ensure child participation in all areas of life. The European Union urged States parties to step up efforts to combat all forms of abuse against children. In that connection, it welcomed the work of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and called on States to penalize all forms of sexual exploitation of children and to take effective measures to ensure prosecution of offenders and address the needs of the victims.

67. The European Union continued to emphasize the Convention's clear prohibition on imposing capital punishment on persons below 18 years of age. Significant advances had been made in combating economic exploitation of children through improving corporate social responsibility. However, overall progress towards eliminating child labour was still too slow. The issue should therefore remain high on the political agenda, and in that regard the European Union shared the Secretary-General's view that eliminating the worst forms of child labour by the year 2016 was an ambitious but achievable goal that required the political commitment of Governments.

68. The European Union attached particular importance to combating violence against children and had chosen the issue as its first priority within its Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child. There was an urgent need for closer collaboration and cooperation at all levels in order to eradicate such violence. The European Union welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative on Violence against Children and looked forward to working with her in implementing the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children.

69. The European Union paid tribute to the work of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and also recognized the central role of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in demobilizing child soldiers and ending impunity. The European Union reaffirmed its commitment to Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005), 1820 (2008) and 1882 (2009) and would work vigilantly to follow up on those resolutions and on the political steps set forth in the Paris Principles. It also called on States to sign, ratify and implement the Optional Protocols to the Convention.

70. Stressing the importance of close collaboration between the United Nations system, regional organizations, civil society and Governments, the European Union continued to actively support the different mandates and joint efforts of UNICEF, the Special Rapporteurs and Representatives and other relevant actors to ensure the protection and well-being of all children. Five years ahead of the MDGs target year of 2015, the European Union would continue to work with the United Nations system and other Member States in order to achieve the full realization of the right to education for all children, a key element in poverty eradication.

71. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that increases in Government spending on health, along with improvements in public health services and expanded access to safe drinking water, had led to a significant reduction in child mortality rates in the SADC region. The provision of antiretroviral drugs free of charge to 1 million people on the African continent had cut down mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS by 25 per cent in southern Africa.

72. The SADC Strategic Framework and Programme of Action for 2008-2015 constituted a comprehensive effort to provide care and support to orphans and vulnerable children and youth, based on the premise that people were the real wealth of nations and that development should expand people's opportunities to live full and creative lives. Furthermore, SADC recognized that investing in the well-being of the region's children was the most effective way to prevent juvenile delinquency. In preparation for the challenge of implementing the Strategic Framework and Programme of Action, different organizations must work together to meet the basic developmental needs of children and youth. Many SADC countries had either harmonized or were in the process of harmonizing their national laws with international law and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, with a view to reconciling universal values with African customs, attitudes and practices and guaranteeing socio-economic rights, poverty and scarcity notwithstanding.

73. Despite progress made towards implementation of the Plan of Action contained in the "World fit for children" document, resource constraints remained a challenge for SADC countries, particularly in the light of the combined effects of global financial and food and energy crises, the recurrence and intensity of natural disasters associated with climate change and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The number of orphan and vulnerable children and youth in the SADC region attested to the particularly devastating impact of the pandemic and of other diseases. According to UNICEF and Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimates, there were over 16 million orphans under the age of 18 in the region. In addition, women and girls were disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS, both as potential victims of the disease and as unpaid caregivers.

74. SADC member States expressed concern at the growing phenomenon of trafficking in persons, which constituted a sophisticated and aggressive form of slavery. There was a need for comprehensive legislation to combat the phenomenon and to protect and assist victims. In May of that year in Maputo, Mozambique, SADC ministers had held a conference on trafficking, and adopted the Draft Strategic Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in the SADC Region. SADC called upon all relevant stakeholders to assist its

Member States in tackling human trafficking. As in previous years, SADC member States would be sponsoring a draft resolution on the girl child and hoped that it would be adopted by consensus.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.



General Assembly

Sixty-fourth session

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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 15 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Penke (Latvia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/64/315)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/64/172, A/64/254 and A/64/182-E/2009/110)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/64/285)

1. **Mr. Bart** (Saint Kitts and Nevis), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the people of the Caribbean region, who were its greatest resource, had been fighting for decades for freedom, justice and peace; CARICOM was therefore all the more determined to promote better standards of living for children. Accordingly, CARICOM fully supported the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by nearly all the States Members of the Organization.

2. However, for the aims of the Convention to be fully achieved, it was necessary to provide children with legal protection, invest more in prenatal and post-natal care and ensure quality education for infants; those were all factors that determined their future. Moreover, since a good start in life also depended on a favourable family environment, the international community should redouble its efforts to protect and promote family rights.

3. In several CARICOM States, free health care was available in clinics and public hospitals, the infant mortality rate was decreasing while the immunization rate was rising, and measures were taken to prevent mother-to-child HIV/AIDS transmission and to help infected children to live with the virus. Regional plans and programmes had also been implemented to enhance infant health care and education, particularly for those at greatest risk and without access to formal education, under the Roving Caregivers Programme and the 1997 Plan of Action for Early Childhood Education, Care and Development.

4. On the whole, the CARICOM countries had achieved universal primary education and had set themselves the same goal for secondary education. In view of the current demand for skilled and specialized labour, they were striving to make the necessary investments to improve the quality of education.

5. Recalling the main points of the Secretary-General's report on the girl child (A/64/315), he said that CARICOM associated itself with the effort to combat all forms of discrimination against women, particularly girls, and that it was imperative that measures should be taken to ensure that they did not become the major victims of the crisis, especially when their families were among the poorest.

6. CARICOM welcomed the emphasis placed, in the current draft resolution on the rights of children, on the importance of the right of children to express themselves freely and participate in social life, and on the related rights and duties of parents. The Caribbean region had already produced leading figures in the world of science, literature, economics and sport, and in the past 10 years no effort had been spared to encourage young people to participate actively in various national and regional programmes, like the Caribbean Youth Ambassador Programme.

7. As a result of the unremitting efforts of numerous governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, considerable progress had been made in the CARICOM countries, which were well on the way to achieving Goals 1, 2, 4 and 5 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Nevertheless, although the majority of children were happy and healthy, all too many children were still exposed to such scourges as exclusion, crime, violence, particularly domestic violence, HIV/AIDS and poverty. A four-year programme had therefore been set in motion to monitor respect for children's rights and encourage children's active participation in society.

8. Seven years after the General Assembly's special session on children, the international community must continue to make every possible effort to enable children to flourish in a world fit for them.

9. **Ms. Boutin** (Canada), speaking on behalf of the CANZ group of countries (Australia, Canada and New Zealand), reaffirmed the commitment of those countries to the rights of children. She hoped that the goal of universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child would soon be reached, as the implementation of that text and of its two Optional Protocols was one of the best ways of promoting those rights; the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and non-governmental organizations had done commendable work in that regard. The CANZ group looked forward

to participating in the first meeting in December 2009 of the Open-Ended Working Group on an optional protocol to the Convention to provide a communications procedure and welcomed the emphasis placed in the current draft resolution on children's rights on the essential right of children to express their opinion freely in all matters affecting them.

10. Priority must be given, however, to combating all forms of violence against children; that called for tireless efforts through all stages of prevention, early detection and response, and recovery. She therefore welcomed the appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children, who would bring proven competence and commitment to that task.

11. The World Congress against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in November 2008, had helped to strengthen and improve the legal protection offered to children, while the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children could assist States in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. On the question of children and armed conflict, Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) should help to reduce the number of cases of rape and sexual violence; moreover, persistent offenders must be punished more systematically in order for them to be held accountable for their acts. The international community must continue to progress in combating the participation of children in armed conflict, in particular by stressing the accountability of persistent offenders, strengthening the monitoring and reporting mechanism and ensuring that all types of violations were covered.

12. A global partnership between Member States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society would help to ensure respect for the rights of children so that they could reach their full potential.

13. **Mr. Heller** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, which included Jamaica representing CARICOM, welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children, while deeply regretting the delay in making that appointment.

14. The Rio Group commended the Human Rights Council for adopting, at its eleventh session, the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and hoped that the General Assembly would approve them.

Moreover, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it attached importance to the universal ratification of the Convention and its Protocols and their full implementation.

15. The Group, together with the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the European Union, was again one of the main sponsors of the draft omnibus resolution on the rights of children. Over the years, the resolutions adopted had supplemented the Convention and the legal system surrounding it. The Rio Group expressed the hope that the approach followed at the current session, in particular the emphasis placed on the participation of children in decision-making, would not lessen the omnibus character of the draft resolution.

16. All children had the right to express their opinion freely on all matters affecting them, with due regard for their age and maturity, and to take part in corresponding activities at school, in the family or community or in government institutions. Children could not fully exercise their basic rights unless they were treated as subjects of law within a democratic framework. In view of the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, children could not easily enjoy freedom of expression unless other rights were respected, particularly to health, food and education. Effective enjoyment of the right to development was also essential.

17. The Rio Group drew attention to child victims of enforced disappearances and called on Member States to take appropriate steps to prevent and punish abductions of minors and to cooperate in seeking to locate and identify victims, in order to reunite them with their families.

18. Seven years after its adoption, the document entitled "A world fit for children" was as relevant as ever, since its ultimate goal, which was to ensure the well-being of all children in all societies, had still not been achieved. The Latin American and Caribbean countries were committed to respecting and upholding all the rights of children; international cooperation and the promotion of development had a decisive role in protecting and promoting the well-being of children, as did civil society and individuals, not to mention the media. The measures and policies adopted must respect the best interests of children and gender equality.

19. In November 2008, the Latin American and Caribbean region had hosted the World Congress against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents and its preparatory meeting, held in Brazil and Argentina respectively. It had emerged from the deliberations that the vulnerability of children and adolescents all over the world to such crimes as rape, trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, abduction or organ trafficking was accentuated by poverty, social inequalities, discrimination, emigration, insecurity and organized crime. The Rio Group reaffirmed in that regard its firm resolve to achieve the goals of the Rio Declaration and Plan of Action to prevent and stop the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. Moreover, the elimination of all forms of violence against children was essential for their personal and social development; it was important to protect children in particular situations, in particular children travelling alone, working children, children who had committed crimes or had been sentenced to death, or child victims of humanitarian or economic crises. The Rio Group welcomed the growing attention being paid by United Nations bodies, funds and programmes to combating violence against children and recommended the adoption of gender-sensitive measures to uphold their rights and fight impunity, involving the public authorities, the family and society. Lastly, stressing the importance of cooperation and of strengthening international standards and instruments, he reaffirmed the Rio Group's determination to achieve the related MDGs so as to create a world fit for children.

20. **Mr. Sparber** (Liechtenstein) said that his country supported the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly article 12 on the participation of children. Liechtenstein was in favour of the establishment of a mechanism to report violations of the provisions of the Convention; such a mechanism would also strengthen national procedures for child protection. He looked forward to discussing the matter at the next session of the Human Rights Council's working group on the subject.

21. Liechtenstein had consulted children and adolescents and taken into account their proposals when framing the law concerning them, adopted in February 2009. His delegation was of the view that Governments and legislators should seek the views of children on all matters affecting them and respect the principle of the best interests of the child.

22. Liechtenstein, which had sponsored the World Youth Assembly in 2009, wished greater account to be taken in the international arena of the opinion of children and young people. In many regions of the world, it fell to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to make known the situation of children who were deprived of freedom of expression. Liechtenstein welcomed the UNICEF report "Progress for Children. A Report Card on Child Protection", but was disturbed by some of its findings, particularly the fact that more than half of children in detention had been neither tried nor sentenced. It was all the more important that the right to a fair trial and the right to *habeas corpus* should be respected, given that children could not fully defend themselves.

23. States were obliged to provide children with a protected legal environment. First, all newborns should be registered so as to benefit from social protection and be less exposed to such crimes as trafficking, sexual exploitation and illegal adoption. As a party to the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, Liechtenstein called on States that had not yet done so to ratify that instrument as a matter of urgency. Determined to reduce statelessness among children, his country had withdrawn its reservation to article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had recently adopted a law enabling stateless children residing in Liechtenstein to acquire citizenship.

24. As an active member of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, Liechtenstein reaffirmed its support for Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) and welcomed the Council's enhanced monitoring of acts of violence against children. States bore primary responsibility for prosecuting perpetrators of serious violations of the rights of children in armed conflict, while the International Criminal Court could play a complementary role in that regard.

25. **Ms. Shinohara** (Japan) said that, 20 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, much remained to be done. Japan would make every effort to cooperate with the international community to implement the Convention, particularly articles 2, 3, 6 and 12 on non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life and the right to be heard, respectively.

26. Concerning resolution 63/241 on the rights of the child, adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-

third session, she said that Japan was greatly concerned about the world's 220 million child workers. More than half were involved in the worst forms of child labour, as child soldiers or victims of sexual exploitation, trafficking or forced labour. According to the Secretary-General's report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/64/172), education played a key role in combating child labour since it provided children with the means of defending their rights, particularly the right to participate in decision-making, and of combating inequality, thereby contributing to human security.

27. Japan welcomed the stand taken by the international community against the sexual exploitation of children, notably on the occasion of the World Congress against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. It expressed appreciation to the Brazilian Government for hosting that Congress and to UNICEF, the End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes network (ECPAT) and the NGO Group on the Convention on the Rights of the Child for their contributions to its work. The issue of child pornography required the urgent attention of the international community. Japan was committed to closer cooperation in that area on the basis of the Rio Declaration to prevent and stop the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, as part of the efforts to combat all forms of sexual exploitation.

28. Japan welcomed the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009), calling on the Secretary-General to include killing and maiming of children and rape and other sexual violence in the annexes to his reports on children and armed conflict. It was important to send a strong political message to the perpetrators of such crimes; the international community must continue to monitor the implementation of that resolution and work together to ensure respect for the rights of children.

29. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that in recent years her country had experienced internal changes with a positive impact on human development and the welfare of children. The implementation of national policies on democratic security, social protection and justice, poverty reduction, economic growth and sustainable development, and the massive demobilization of illegal armed groups had allowed Colombia gradually to restore a stable and secure environment conducive to the well-being of children and to the enjoyment of their

rights. It had also aligned its legislation on the rights of children with international standards and provided funding for national, departmental and municipal action to protect children.

30. Colombia had placed the right to education at the heart of its social policy, as reflected in the importance assigned to its "Education Revolution" strategy. The school enrolment rate was now 100 per cent at primary level and 78 per cent at secondary level. It was hoped that, by 2010, 76 per cent of pupils in public schools would have access to information and communication technology. Colombia also attached great importance to preschool education and in April 2009 had launched a programme to improve access to education for children under the age of six in the poorest areas; 300,000 children should benefit in 2009 and 400,000 in 2010. Measures had also been taken to enhance the food and nutritional security of millions of children and students. In order to keep children in the education system and provide them with nutritional support, a cash transfer programme had been set up in support of families. Universal health insurance should be achieved by 2010.

31. Colombia welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative on violence against children and hoped that the relevant United Nations bodies would provide her with the necessary support, including financial support. Colombia had strengthened the national legal framework for preventing, combating and punishing acts of violence against children. It was also making efforts to eliminate domestic, community and terrorist violence and assist victims while upholding their rights. Moreover, it had agreed to submit to the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict established by Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), which would strengthen the actions of national institutions responsible for defending the rights of child victims of violence. Colombia took note of the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/64/254) and requested that some of the topics and recommendations contained in it should be considered in greater detail in the light of the provisions of international law on armed conflict.

32. States must spare no effort to maintain and strengthen social protection programmes, particularly for children, in view of the serious repercussions of the financial and economic crisis on the situation of

children in various regions of the world, as emphasized by the Secretary-General in his report on the follow-up to the General Assembly special session on children (A/64/285). The United Nations should encourage States to cooperate effectively with a view to achieving the goals for children set by the General Assembly.

33. **Mr. Vigny** (Switzerland) said that the protection and promotion of the rights of children affected by armed conflict were a priority for his country. His delegation therefore welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009), under which all parties to an armed conflict who killed or maimed children or committed sexual violence against them would be included in lists annexed to the reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, with the possibility of targeted measures being taken against them.

34. However, in order for the situation of children in armed conflict to improve, standard-setting achievements at the international level needed to be transposed to the national level and the international community must take action for the long term. First, special efforts must be made to combat impunity and concrete measures taken against those who committed serious violations of the rules of international law in respect of children. It was therefore crucial to strengthen communication between the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the relevant sanctions committees. Secondly, the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, UNICEF and other bodies both within and outside the United Nations system must be better coordinated and based on a common understanding of the problems and their solutions, so as to achieve tangible results and avoid duplication. Thirdly, Switzerland shared the Special Representative's view that child protection should be better integrated into United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations and political missions and that specialists in childhood protection should help to plan those missions and be involved in their technical evaluation. The know-how of United Nations country teams and UNICEF must be put to use. Fourthly, the international community should redouble its efforts with a view to the effective implementation of the Paris Principles, in particular to prevent the recruitment of children and facilitate the reintegration of victims, which should be community-based and long-term.

35. Switzerland was very concerned about the fact that, every year, some 3 million women, mainly girls under the age of 14, risked becoming victims of female genital mutilation. That practice, clearly linked to gender inequality, constituted an extreme form of violence and discrimination. Communities that engaged in it did so in the belief that they thereby ensured a girl's marriage, purity, chastity, beauty or family honour. Its continued existence was underpinned by a very strong social norm, which could be relinquished only if there were an evolution in society. Through migration, the problem of female genital mutilation had spread to Western Europe and to the American continent. Switzerland was currently developing a criminal provision that would explicitly make female genital mutilation a criminal offence. It would be possible, however, to eliminate the practice only if States cooperated with the relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations. It was essential to take further the multilateral debate on the role and approach to be adopted by countries of destination of migrants in order to compile best practices and move towards standard-setting with a view to preventing and putting an end to such mutilations.

36. **Ms. Shanidze** (Georgia) said that, as an outcome of coordinated, targeted efforts by the Government and its international partners, Georgia had made substantial progress in respect of childcare facilities. Under the Government's programme, which emphasized gate-keeping on entry, the establishment of an alternative day-care network and strengthening of the foster families network, the number of children in State institutions had been reduced by 54 per cent since 2004, and the volume of funds allocated to that programme had nearly tripled during the same period. In addition to the social services they received, families in difficulty were also provided with direct financial assistance from the State, which helped them to cope with the economic crisis and keep their children at home. The Government had also adopted national standards for improved childcare services in State institutions and a health insurance programme covering the health-care needs of 2,300 children in such institutions. At the same time, the infant mortality rate had dropped from 18 to less than 15 per thousand and the maternal mortality rate had dropped from 45 to 14 per thousand.

37. Nevertheless, Georgia faced huge problems. The conflict with the Russian Federation had taken hundreds of lives and displaced thousands of people and had even led to ethnic cleansing in the Tskhinvali region, in South Ossetia. Without the help of the international community, notably several United Nations bodies, several thousand people who had been forced from their homes would not have survived the severe winter. As for the situation in the two Georgian regions under illegal military occupation, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it had considerably worsened: the occupying forces were blocking the admission of humanitarian assistance and international observers, cutting the occupied territories off from the rest of the country and depriving their inhabitants of the right to receive an education in their mother tongue. Restrictions on movement across administrative lines prevented those living in Gali district from having access to educational and health-care facilities. It was a matter of great concern since those most affected by the situation were children and women, particularly pregnant women. In addition, the use of Georgian as a language of instruction had been deliberately discontinued in a number of State schools in the two occupied regions and children attending schools in neighbouring districts could no longer go to them.

38. The Georgian Government was anxious to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, but a necessary precondition was the complete withdrawal of the occupying forces from the two regions; moreover, a political settlement could not preclude the right of all refugees and displaced persons and their descendants, regardless of their ethnicity, to return to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as recognized in General Assembly resolution 62/249.

39. **Archbishop Migliore** (Observer for the Holy See) said that the number of States that had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols since their adoption showed that a consensus existed on the need to protect children. His delegation encouraged all States that had not yet done so to ratify those instruments and to ensure their correct application.

40. While it was encouraging that under-five child mortality had been steadily decreasing worldwide over the past two decades, it was a fact that in the previous 10 years, more than 2 million children had been killed in armed conflicts and 6 million had been disabled, tens of thousands of children had been mutilated by

anti-personnel mines and more than 300,000 had been recruited as child soldiers. In addition, all too often children's right to life was denied, in particular through prenatal selection; children were the first victims of famine and war; many lacked food and housing and had no access to education or health care, while others were sold to traffickers, sexually exploited, recruited by illegal armed groups, uprooted by forced displacements or compelled to work.

41. To eliminate violence against children, States must assume their role in protecting the family and promoting family life. Civil society also had a part to play in that regard and in combating all forms of violence against children. The Catholic Church, for its part, worked every day to provide many children with education and to help abused or neglected children to regain their place in society and, if possible, in their families. In view of the importance of the family in the lives of children, all legislation regarding children must take into account the indispensable role of parents. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the family was the natural and fundamental group unit of society and was entitled to protection by society and the State.

42. Furthermore, children should be fully respected as full human beings. While the Convention on the Rights of the Child did not contain an explicit article on the right to participate, it nevertheless provided in its article 12 that children should freely express their views and that those views should be given due weight.

43. **Ms. Sapag** (Chile) said that her country had noted with great interest the recommendations made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in her report (A/64/254), particularly the recommendation concerning the priority to be given to education as an integral aspect of emergency and humanitarian planning. States and non-State actors were called on to respect schools as zones of peace. Chile welcomed the recent adoption of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) which, by broadening the scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism provided for in resolution 1612 (2005) to include deliberate acts not constituting collateral damage, such as sexual violence against children in armed conflict, marked a step forward in their protection. Chile also welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children and recommended that she should be provided with sufficient financial and human

resources to discharge her mandate fully and within the shortest possible time. Her delegation shared the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the girl child (A/64/315) that health systems had a crucial role to play in overcoming the inequalities suffered by girls and that the elimination of early marriage, female genital mutilation and obstetric fistula would contribute to the achievement of Goals 3 and 5 of the MDGs.

44. In the area of health, her country was concerned that Goals 4 and 5 of the MDGs could not be achieved and invited the United Nations system and States to fulfil their commitments in that regard; Chile, for its part, was striving to attain those Goals through a cooperation programme for the elimination of maternal and infant mortality in Latin America. In addition, Chile had set up a system of childhood protection which catered to the needs of all children and supported their development, from conception to the age of 4, and also gave priority to the family. It had also considerably developed its network of day-care centres, whose number had increased from 700 to more than 4,000 under President Bachelet.

45. **Ms. Liu Lingxiao** (China) said that it was difficult to protect children from poverty, hunger, disease, illegal employment, drugs and sexual exploitation in the current context of financial crisis and that it was therefore necessary for developed countries to assist developing countries in meeting that challenge. Mindful of the development of its hundreds of millions of children, who made up one fifth of all the children in the world, China had set up comprehensive legislation to protect the rights of children and had established special agencies to serve their interests. The eleventh Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development, adopted in 2006, placed emphasis on upholding the rights of children to life, development, protection and participation and on the creation of an environment conducive to the growth of children and the promotion of their physical and mental development. The National Human Rights Action Plan, adopted in April 2009, also contained specific provisions to protect the rights of children.

46. The Chinese Government was continuing its efforts to improve its legal and regulatory systems for minors. To combat child trafficking, the State had established an assistance mechanism and taken specific measures to protect children in vulnerable situations, particularly girls. Steps had also been taken to allow all

children without exception to participate in family, school and social life.

47. China had always fulfilled its treaty obligations, including its obligation under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography to submit reports, which it prepared with the participation of civil society.

48. In cooperation with UNICEF, China had carried out numerous projects in a variety of areas, including health and nutrition, education, prevention of natural disasters and the development of children in poverty-stricken areas. It was no easy task to ensure the well-being of 367 million children under the age of 18, but the Chinese Government was determined to work with the international community to build a future fit for them.

49. **Ms. Juul** (Norway) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had considerably improved children's prospects for enjoying their fundamental rights and that over the past 20 years the specific rights and needs of children had been put on the international agenda. Nevertheless, much remained to be done, in particular towards the recognition that children had human rights in their own capacity. Children must be treated as competent individuals with opinions to share; their right to be heard applied in both the public and the private spheres. Under Norwegian law, children over the age of 7 and younger children who were capable of forming their own views were given the opportunity to express their views before decisions were made in cases affecting them, particularly divorces. Mechanisms also existed in Norway for children to participate in organizations, institutions, municipalities and schools; however, a number of challenges still needed to be met in order for them to participate fully in decision-making processes in the country.

50. The United Nations study on violence against children (A/61/299) showed that children were at risk of violence in many contexts and that girls were particularly vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. They also suffered from the consequences of harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage. According to that study, more efforts were needed to combat all forms of violence. Norway welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence

against children, who would be able to discharge her mandate effectively only if she received sufficient financial support. All Governments should therefore contribute to the UNICEF-administered Trust Fund. Norway, for its part, had allocated more than half a million dollars for the establishment of the office of the Special Representative.

51. Norway also commended the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009), which called on the Secretary-General to add to his "list of shame" those parties to armed conflict that killed, maimed and/or raped children. Norway likewise welcomed the Security Council's resolve to enhance communication between its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the relevant sanctions committees on the question of violations of the rights of children and abuses committed against children in armed conflict.

52. It was the duty of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to implement that instrument as well as to establish and strengthen effective national systems for protecting children's rights and to put particular emphasis on the promotion of children's right to health and education, since not investing in children was tantamount to not investing in development.

53. **Ms. Phipps** (United States of America) said that her country attached the utmost importance to the elimination of child labour, in particular the worst forms of child labour referred to in International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182. Since 1995, the United States Department of Labor had devoted more than \$720 million to programmes to combat child labour around the world. Some 1.3 million children had thus been rescued from exploitation in 80 countries and offered new hope through education and training, and families had been helped to cease being reliant on their children to meet their basic needs. The Department of Labor also conducted studies aimed at raising public awareness of the problem of the exploitation of children and encouraging broader action to support efforts to combat child labour and forced labour. Welcoming the work done in that area by UNICEF, to which the United States Congress had allocated \$130 million in 2009, and by ILO, the United States' two most crucial partners in the effort to protect children's rights worldwide, she said that, despite the progress made,

some 218 million children were still engaged in various forms of child labour in the world and that the United States would continue to strive to put an end to that phenomenon.

54. The United States was also committed to addressing the trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. A major nationwide study had been undertaken on the subject; its findings would provide decision-makers with a better understanding of the phenomenon and its scope. In addition, a package of outreach materials on trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children would soon be distributed to law enforcement officials, service providers, schools and parents throughout the country to help them to detect children in danger and inform them of the local and national resources available.

55. The United States was also concerned about the problem of early marriage and had introduced a resolution on the forced marriage of the girl child containing proposals for action which had been adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women by consensus in 2007.

56. Lastly, the United States was committed to protecting children from the scourges of war and preventing violence against girls in armed conflict, particularly sexual violence. Through its support for international organizations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United States was helping to meet the needs of refugees and conflict victims, including children. In 2008, the United States Congress had passed the Child Soldiers Prevention Act, which restricted the types of assistance that could be received by countries whose armed forces or Government-supported armed groups recruited or used child soldiers.

57. **Mr. Bui The Giang** (Viet Nam) said that his country shared the concerns of the Secretary-General about the persistence of various forms of child labour, violence against children, particularly in armed conflict, discrimination against girls and trafficking in children, as well as the high number of child victims of HIV/AIDS and drugs. While those issues called for concrete measures, the overall objective of protecting and promoting the rights of children could not be achieved unless three priorities were addressed.

58. First, it was important to incorporate the protection and promotion of children's rights into

national legal systems and socio-economic development strategies, especially in the context of the current financial and economic crisis, which led many countries to make choices that frequently ran counter to children's interests. In Viet Nam, the improved legal system for the protection of children's rights, the National Action Plan for Children (2001-2010) and the incorporation of children's issues into five-year socio-economic development plans had provided the country with a comprehensive framework in that area, thus laying solid foundations for the implementation of concrete measures.

59. Secondly, the international community as a whole needed to understand that education was essential for the sustainable protection and promotion of children's rights. In Viet Nam, the Government had recognized the need to invest in education for children and had therefore sought to achieve the highest possible rate of enrolment, retention and completion and to provide opportunities for vocational training. In the past few years, Viet Nam had achieved a school enrolment rate of 97.5 per cent at primary level and 85 per cent at secondary level. Through cooperation with UNICEF and other partners, schools had been built in remote areas and projects had been carried out targeting children with disabilities.

60. Thirdly, special attention must be given to health care for children, in particular by ensuring free vaccination, reducing child morbidity and mortality rates and providing social protection schemes. The results of efforts to achieve the HIV/AIDS-related Goal of the MDGs were disappointing. In 2007, the number of infected children between the ages of 13 and 19 had accounted for 7.15 per cent of the total number of HIV/AIDS carriers, not counting those who had lost their parents to the disease. Viet Nam therefore called on United Nations agencies and international partners to support its National Action Plan on HIV/AIDS and reaffirmed its readiness to collaborate with the international community in the best interests of children.

61. **Mr. Gaspar Martins** (Angola) said that, while fragile progress had been made internationally, the situation of children in sub-Saharan Africa remained basically unchanged where it had not deteriorated. The subregion accounted worldwide for 52 per cent of children not in school and 90 per cent of the estimated 2.1 million HIV/AIDS-infected children. Nevertheless,

Angola remained optimistic, as some progress had been made, and looked forward to achieving more.

62. Recognizing that armed conflicts and other forms of violence had a devastating effect on children, Angola reaffirmed its support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. In 2007, Angola had established the National Children's Council to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the national child protection and development policy, as well as the action of local bodies responsible for its execution. Since then, a number of instruments had been put in place, such as a mechanism to monitor the implementation of policies and gaps by age and by sex and it had been decided to establish 11 correctional facilities for boys and girls by 2011. In addition, the Angolan Government had organized the Fourth National Children's Forum, which had reviewed progress in fulfilling the 11 commitments made at the Third Forum in 2007, with a view to the achievement of the MDGs relating to children, and had made various recommendations, aimed in particular at significantly increasing the primary school enrolment rate. Angola had also developed a National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy and Plan of Action with the goal of lowering rates of chronic malnutrition and extreme poverty and eventually reducing maternal and infant mortality and promoting healthy living. Angola reaffirmed its support for the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the 2002 World Summit for Children and its full commitment to serving the best interests of children.

63. **Mr. Rakovskiy** (Russian Federation) said the principles and objectives set out in the outcome of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2) should spur all States to action and that UNICEF had an important role to play in that regard. In the Russian Federation, child protection was a national priority, reflected in particular in the "Children of Russia" programme (2007-2010). Notwithstanding the crisis, the Government had increased its assistance to large families in order to create conditions, particularly in respect of housing and education, that met international criteria. That had produced results since the birth rate had risen in some parts of the country and there had been a decrease in maternal and infant mortality, as well as child morbidity. In addition, a fund had been set up to assist

so-called problem children, under a programme targeting children in difficult situations and orphans.

64. The Russian Federation had undertaken to comply strictly with the norms of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, particularly in respect of the rights of children. In September 2008, it had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and was preparing to accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It endorsed the provisions of the Rio Declaration and Plan of Action to prevent and stop the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, adopted in 2008, particularly in regard to the suppression of pornography on the Internet, and its appeal for urgent action to punish such exploitation. The Russian Federation had thus increased criminal responsibility for crimes against juveniles and, in November 2008, had amended its Criminal Code to provide for a longer prison term for the perpetrators of such crimes as child trafficking, child pornography and its dissemination. In July 2009, the President of the Russian Federation had signed a federal law providing for heavier penalties for those found guilty of crimes against children, notably sex-related crimes, in particular repeat offenders, and in September 2009 he had established by decree a plenipotentiary office for children's rights and called on regional councils to do likewise at the level of the federated entities.

65. **Ms. Dunlop** (Brazil) welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children and said that the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child offered an opportunity to reflect on achievements and the challenges ahead. With the largest juvenile population in the Americas, numbering 62 million children and adolescents, Brazil had already incorporated the principles of the Convention into its 1988 Constitution, even before the adoption of the Convention, in 1989. It was also the first country, six months after the adoption of that instrument, to have established specific legislation, the Statute of the Child and the Adolescent, which was in full accordance with the Convention and had inspired several laws in Latin America. As a result of the Convention, children were recognized to have rights, which must be protected and promoted. Brazil had been encouraged to seek to

promote social inclusion for all, with particular attention to groups that had traditionally been subjected to discrimination.

66. Brazil had thus made considerable progress. In particular, it had reduced poverty, ensured greater access to education, reduced infant mortality and child labour and put in place a legal and policy framework to combat sexual exploitation and promote juvenile justice. Much remained to be done, however. One of the main concerns in Brazil was the situation of abandoned children. Together with other countries in the region, Brazil had engaged in a four-year consultative process which had led to the elaboration of the draft United Nations Guidelines for the Appropriate Use and Conditions of Alternative Care for Children, which had been adopted by consensus by the Human Rights Council at its eleventh session (resolution 11/7). Brazil urged States and relevant stakeholders to support those Guidelines, which the General Assembly should adopt on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Convention. She recalled, lastly, the adoption, at the World Congress against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, in 2008, of the Rio Declaration and Plan of Action, which would further the cause of the world's children.

67. **Mr. Mubarak** (Sudan) took note of the reports before the Committee, in particular that of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/64/254). Sudan was very keen to cooperate with the Special Representative and intended to organize a second visit to its territory for her very soon. In the past, conflicts had broken out in the southern and eastern parts of the Sudan, where, however, peace had since been restored. Nevertheless, the country continued to suffer, in particular in Darfur, from the actions of rebel groups who refused to sit down at the negotiating table.

68. The January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the Peace Agreement for Darfur and the October 2006 Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement all contained provisions to protect children and combat violence against children in armed conflict. The Interim National Constitution and the South Sudan Interim Constitution, in particular, had been guided by established international instruments for the protection and promotion of children's rights. The Sudanese National Council, in 2008, had promulgated a Children's Act, designed to bring the country's legislation into line with international instruments, in particular the

Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Sudan had ratified without reservation. The 2007 Armed Forces Act regulated the protection of the rights of children in armed conflict; it was based on the provisions of the relevant Optional Protocol and international humanitarian law. In addition, the MDGs had guided the national strategy and five-year plan (2007-2011) for the protection of children's rights, drawn up in consultation with the National Council for Strategic Planning and UNICEF.

69. In 1999, Sudan had set up a committee to combat the abduction of children and women, which had been instrumental in preventing children from being abducted during armed conflicts. In 2008, when the Justice and Equality Movement had attacked the city of Omdurman, it had been found to have children in its ranks. The children concerned had been taken into the care of the Sudanese Government, as reported by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Sudan in her report for the period January to July 2008 (A/HCR/9/13). Sudan condemned all actions committed against children in armed conflict. He denounced, in particular, the abductions of children carried out on the border between Sudan and Chad, deploring the fact that, owing to the complicity of certain influential individuals, some of those responsible had managed to avoid being held accountable by law. He thus accused certain bodies, in particular the Arche de Zoé association, of engaging, under cover of humanitarian action, in criminal or political activities serving specific interests, which the Sudanese Government was seeking to combat. He hoped that the international community would apply pressure to the rebel movements so that they would participate in peace negotiations.

70. **Mr. Ba Hla Aye** (Myanmar) said that the goals that the world had set itself nearly 10 years earlier in the document "A world fit for children" (General Assembly resolution S-27/2) remained largely unfulfilled for, although some progress had been made, the under-five child mortality rate was still high in Asia and Africa and there were still millions of children who had not been immunized and women who died in childbirth for want of qualified assistance.

71. Having successfully carried out a project to reduce maternal and infant mortality, Myanmar had launched a five-year strategic plan for child health development (2005-2009) which should enable it to reduce by two thirds the under-five mortality rate by

2015. Under its annual immunization programme, set up in 1989, Myanmar had immunized 87 per cent of one-year-old children against measles in 2003; it was currently expanding its immunization coverage in cooperation with the World Health Organization and UNICEF. Myanmar had also been seeking to eliminate iodine deficiency disorders through a strategy known as Universal Salt Iodization, which had reduced the visible goitre rate in the country from 33 per cent in 1994 to 2 per cent in 2006. Furthermore, in order to reduce the maternal mortality rate from 3.16 to 0.79 per thousand live births by 2015, the Government had launched nation-wide safe motherhood initiatives, offering women the services of 18,000 midwives and 30,000 auxiliary midwives. Lastly, the Government had set up a National AIDS Committee to supervise the National AIDS Control Programme of the Ministry of Health. As a result, the HIV/AIDS infection rate had fallen from 1.5 per cent in 2000 to 1.3 per cent in 2005.

72. Measures had been taken to increase access to primary education and to improve the retention rate, thereby achieving a 98 per cent primary enrolment rate. To enhance the quality of education, the State was focusing on better teaching methods and teacher training.

73. To prevent the recruitment into the armed forces of children under the age of 18, child soldiers found in military camps and recruitment centres had been discharged and sent home and a working group had been set up following the visit in 2007 of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in order to coordinate United Nations country team visits to recruitment centres and to work out, with that country team, modalities for the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism.

74. Myanmar would continue to strive to achieve the goals of a world fit for children everywhere.

75. **Ms. Pérez Álvarez** (Cuba) said that, notwithstanding the progress achieved, there were still too many cases of children dying under the age of five, working for low wages, victims of organ trafficking, child pornography, prostitution, violence, sexual exploitation and hunger, or deprived of education. That situation had been exacerbated by the current economic and financial crisis.

76. In 50 years, Cuba had reduced the infant mortality rate from 60 per 1,000 live births to 4.7

through a health-care system geared to people's needs and based on universal access to free health care, upgrading of human resources, scientific and technological development and social mobilization for health promotion and disease prevention.

77. Despite the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States, various measures had been taken to safeguard the health of mothers and children, motivate health personnel, integrate primary health-care and hospital services, offer universal vaccination against 13 preventable diseases and achieve early detection of congenital diseases.

78. However, there was currently a shortfall of \$25 million in the Cuban public health system and its children's hospitals were finding it very hard to secure medical supplies, many of which were manufactured by United States companies. So long as countries' policies were guided by principles other than international cooperation and solidarity, millions of people would continue to suffer, including children, who were the future of humanity.

79. **Mr. Şen** (Turkey) said that his country was continuing to do its utmost to promote the rights of children and improve their living conditions. As a party to various international instruments on the rights of children, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Turkey had amended its laws, particularly the Child Protection Code, the Civil Code, the Labour Code and the Criminal Code to bring them into line with the Convention. In addition, it had revised its 2004 Constitution in order to give precedence to international conventions concerning fundamental rights and freedoms, including the rights of children, over national legislation. Lastly, Children's Rights Committees had been established in the 81 provinces of Turkey and a children's rights monitoring committee had been set up within the Turkish Grand National Assembly.

80. **Ms. Shawish** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that, as part of its childhood protection policy, the Libyan Government had established kindergartens and other health care and immunization facilities, together with a children's commission to draw up policies in support of children. It had also incorporated into its legislation the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, it attached considerable importance to ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the prohibition

and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, which protected children from inhuman labour and other immoral activities.

81. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was revolted by the situation of millions of children, displaced, disabled, raped and forcibly enlisted, because they had been caught up against their will in armed conflict. It called on the international community to ensure the return to their homes of the many displaced children and drew attention, in particular, to the situation of children in the occupied territories and in Palestine, who suffered on a daily basis from the effects of oppression, and to that of children in Africa subjected by continual conflicts to hunger, poverty and displacement and deprived of education.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.